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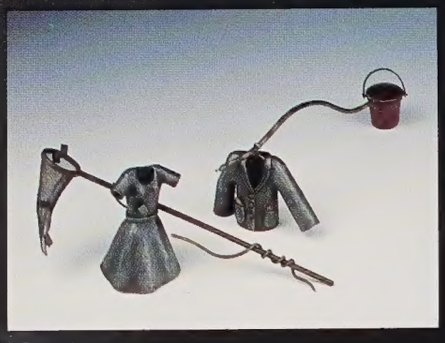

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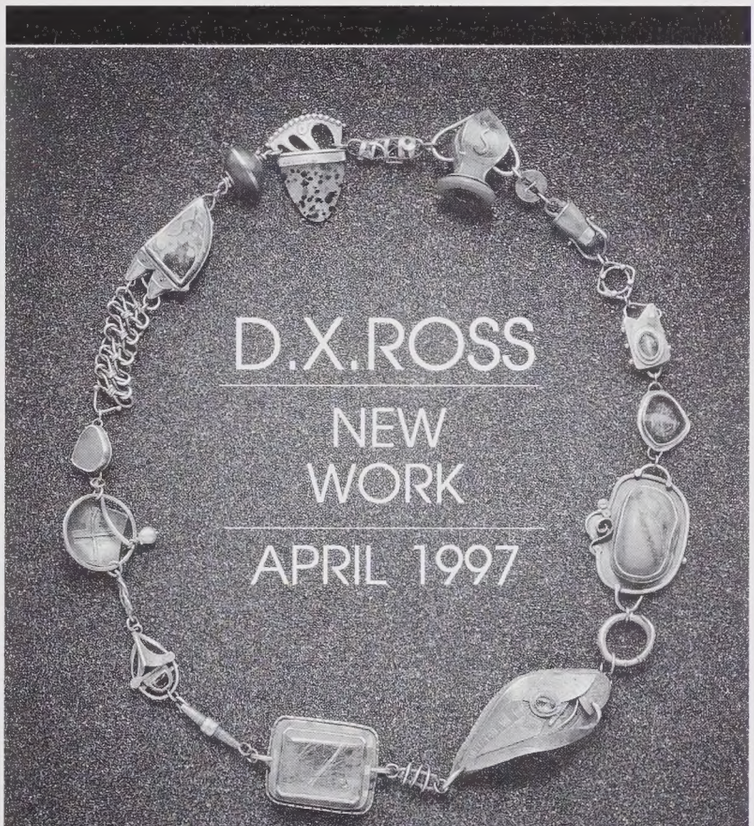

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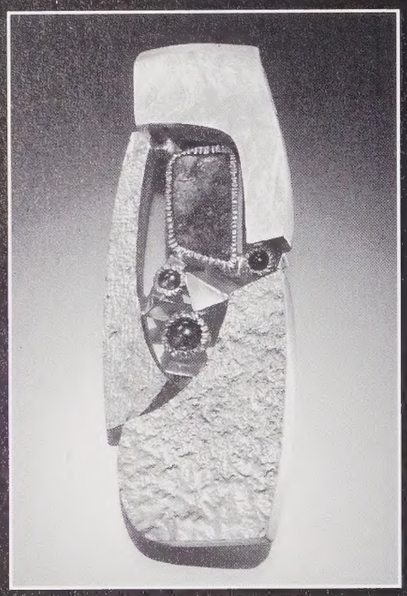

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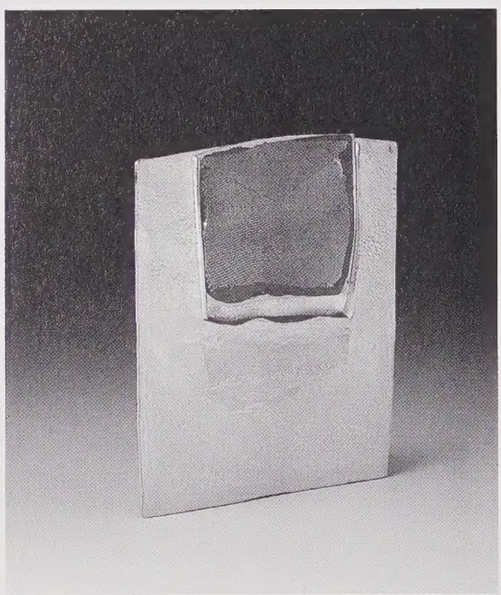

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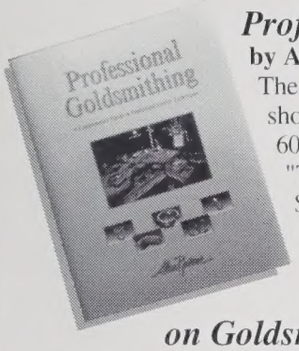

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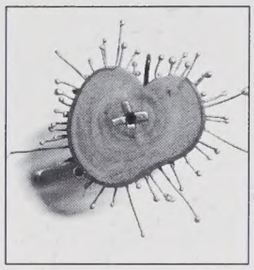
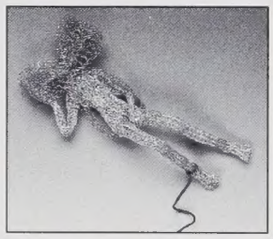


Pendent:
14 kt gold - rose wood



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Julie Mihalisin
Necklace, 1996
glass, silver, 18k, 24k
9 x 5 x 3/8"
Photograph by Douglas Yaple
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Above, left to right
Lois Etherington Betteridge
Large Footless Bowl, 1996
fire-treated copper, 8" dia.
Bowl with Base, 1996
copper, 6" h.
See page 46

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Metalsmith

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Graphic Designer: Richard Mehl
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Advertising Layout: Robert Fleury
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Address editorial material to:
Frank C. Lewis, Editor
Metalsmith
2755 North Murray Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53211
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Editorial

At the risk of boring readers to tears or simply sucking the last breath from an already moribund subject I would like to discuss contemporary Romanticism. My concerns over the *romantic* myths and appeals to romanticism on the part of artists in defense of their production are something more than, as someone once accused me of, "phony postulations on morality." My musings are based on what I would like to think is an intellectual rigor, and a responsibility to understand and acknowledge the impact of language and my responsibilities with that language as both an editor and a teacher.

What troubles me about contemporary romanticism is its appropriation by Macdonalds, AT&T, Miller Brewery, Zima, Converse, Nike, Newt Gingrich,* James Carville, and multitudes of lazy art historians, art professors, artists, critics, and pundits. They all offer up a packaged and easy Romanticism as a panacea for whatever ails us. An advertiser's *romanticism* seems to be little more than snake oil which is traditionally nothing more than a little laudanum, and a great deal of distilled corn. Such promotional romanticism, designed to fire the synapsises of emotion and feeling is often substituted for substantial thought, action, and *real* feelings, suggesting that somehow a consumer product, (and this can, has, and does include numerous artworks and various art histories) can/could fill whatever voids individuals perceive in their lives. Trust me, even though I often am aware of my limitations as a father I am still able to do something that is a lot more effective, genuine, and loving than piling the kids into the car for a trip to the local McD's.

We all disempower ourselves when we settle for an object as the materialization of our feelings, whether that object is ¼ pound of bovine flesh or an ounce of 24k. Artists are empowered not when their works allegedly contain experience but rather when their works become the catalyst for the viewer's/consumer's private experience. And for artists to *master* (I hate that term – isn't there some other way to express the concept of achieving control over material and form?) that language they must (I believe) understand their form and materials at the most base of levels. While I may grudgingly admit that every expression must be considered [equally?] permissable, regardless of how stupid that expression may be, every catalyst is not equal and artists and teachers alike have the responsibility to learn their craft, interrogate their craft, and finally to raise the level of both verbal and material discourse, and challenge the level of viewer's/consumer's experience.

My critical stance regarding *romanticism* is not, nor should it be seen as, an attack on any particular individual or their depth of belief in the efficacy of their strategy, nor is it any dismissal of their capacity for intellectual, critical, and moral thought. What I am questioning instead is what I see as a kind of lazy formulaic romanticism, a way of thinking which can, at its worst, preclude intelligent analysis and careful critical thought. I quickly add that I am equally suspicious of lazy, thoughtless cynicism, materialism, Marxism, neo-deconstructionism, et. al..

When romanticism serves as a substitute for real thought and experience it offers nothing more than ersatz emotions, bathos, and a cheap catharsis that seem no better than the sexual fulfillment offered by 900 numbers.

If I hear one more artist/craftsperson hide behind some vague romantic defense for their work rather than confronting the paradoxes, fissures, and inconsistencies that must be present in every human endeavor (the thing that in fact makes it human) I am going to destroy my copy of *The Sorrows of Werther* and melt everyone of my Brahams CDs.

FCL

* When I ran this through spell check, the computer's dictionary flagged *Gingrich* and offered as an alternative word *jingoism*. Truth *is* stranger than fiction.

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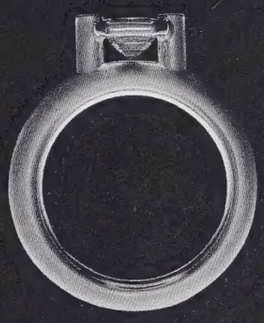

amy: when Matt proposed, he hid the ring in the petals of a dozen long stem roses
allison: Jason hid mine in a piece of apple Pie his mom baked
from an old family recipe
jen: really, how sweet... Sean found mine in the pages of some design magazine,
it's the Post ring by Whitney Boin.
I mean, have you seen it? it won the Diamond of Distinction Award,
you know, not exactly the kind of thing you'd want to hide in a pie...

jen: Allison... Allison, are you still there?

jen: Amy?

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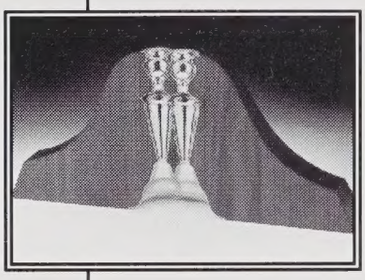

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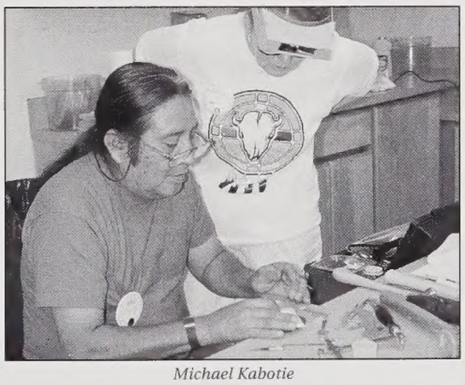

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Letters

Dear Editor:

At the risk of offending everyone (though not intending to insult anyone) the artists' statements in the latest *Exhibition in Print* ruined the entire magazine. Most of the artists' statements were so poor that they were not only a distraction to the work, but took away any credibility the field of metalsmithing could have attained with this publication.

Janet Koplos made a pointed statement at the beginning of the magazine on page 3: "These are objects of visual art. Should they not speak by visual means?"

Granted, some work does benefit from a short insightful statement. But most examples of artists' statements in this past issue were not only too long but poorly written as well. If the artist is going to let words, instead of the visual image, speak for the artwork, then the artist should give as much time and attention to the words as to the artwork itself.

Sincerely, a frustrated and loyal reader

Harriete Estel Berman

P.S. Next time I hope the editor with take greater liberties with the red pen and his authority as the editor of this magazine.

Dear Editor:

Metalsmith is a handsome magazine with elegant pictures. But for a quarterly that is one of the few periodicals in the area, its content seems thin.

Readers are thirsty for more information: about artists, techniques, shows, schools, history. We need fewer opinions and theories. The article by Elizabeth Jones in the Fall 1995 issue is a case in point. Her message that decorative jewelry is undervalued in academia and in *Metalsmith* itself is a good one, but she is too long-winded. Half as much concept and twice as much about her artist examples would have been better.

Most of your articles could be pruned and made stronger. Does the editor really need a full page in every issue? Are the lavish margins and open space at beginnings and endings of articles called for? They look beautiful.

Catherine Butler's essay from the production bench in the current issue is refreshing, funny and readable – but even it could be cut!

Ann Davis

Dear Editor:

On reading the jurors' statement for this year's *Exhibition in Print*, I discovered that musical instruments had been disqualified due to an apparent lack of criteria upon which to judge them. I am a metalsmith who makes instruments that explore the intersection between scientific and musical forms. I use many traditional techniques to achieve my ends, but making sounds is not one of my goals. Rather, my instruments are intended as commentaries on the rupture between the role of inventor and creator in the history of metalsmithing, and recovering the spirit of experimentation.

Based on the jurors' statement, I am now aware why my work was rejected, but the jurors' reasoning still puzzles me. The panel observes, (and correctly, in my view) that there is very little way to determine from slides whether jewelry or other artifacts actually fit the body or perform their supposed functions and so these concerns are routinely disregarded for the jurying of jewelry, hollowware, flatware, etc. Yet the same panel found that, according to Ms. Koplos: "a musical instrument has to conform to standards of construction so that it will make the expected sound and so that the player will know how to use it." I found this post facto criteria to be especially disappointing because my current series of work is about metalsmithing, and yet additional criteria were imposed on the pieces due to the final form that they took.

The jurors' struggle with their decision was apparent in their statement. As a future solution, I would propose that all metalworks which are to be reviewed through their images be accountable to the same standards. I have come to rely on *Metalsmith* magazine to provide a venue for unfamiliar uses of metalsmithing. I would like to see future invitational opportunities address new types of work on equal terms, in keeping with your inclusive traditions.

Sincerely,

Evan H. Larson

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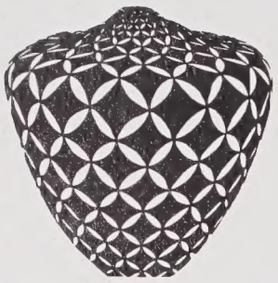

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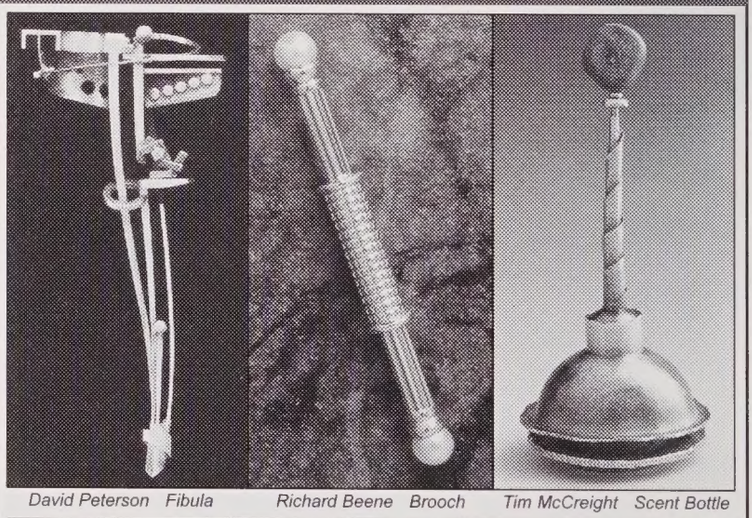

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Recent Sightings

Bruce Metcalf

Right
The author's *The Craftsman Philosopher*, in progress.

Photograph
by Bruce Metcalf

Love's Labors Lost

One of the things that unites practicing jewelers – especially those who have given their lives over to the craft – is a deep love for their labor. Curiously, it's rarely spoken of, and never mentioned as a common element that binds the community of makers together. Like most loves, this passion is both a blessing and a curse: thrilling, nurturing, and sustaining; but also troubling, demanding, and inexplicable. And given the intellectual climate of discourse about art, in which any sincere emotion other than angst seems to be deeply embarrassing, the artworld will not help to clarify this thing. If it is to be explained, jewelers must do the job themselves.

As a working jeweler/metalsmith for more than 25 years, I often wonder about this compulsion that keeps pulling me back to the bench, and once I'm there it refuses to let me do sloppy work. I recognize that there is something that moves me, and I recognize its persistence. But I'm hard pressed to say precisely what it is. I think it is a love for making things carefully. It seems to have two components: first, the making of things; and second, the investment of care.

The only writer I know who has considered this question was David Pye, in his book *The Nature and Art of Workmanship*. Pye speaks of craft as involving the workmanship of risk, in which there is always the possibility of error: the tool slipping, or the hammer missing its mark, or the metal overheating. He opposes this risk with the workmanship of certainty, in which machines can execute the same operation perfectly every time. But within the workmanship of risk, there is both *free* and *regulated* workmanship: the former being deft, quick, and immediate; the latter being slow and painstaking. Pye himself was a woodworker and favored a highly regulated approach. In this, he was very much like a jeweler.

Pye never really addressed the fact that regulated work demanded a powerful motivation, and a great deal of care. He presented his own work as if it were dispassionate, mysteriously unmotivated. Certainly, fine craftsmanship can be uninspired, nothing more than a job. You can see that kind of attitude in some trade jewelers: people who put in their daily eight hours at skillful labor, but for whom the craft is a livelihood and not a passion. But there are still a large number of people motivated primarily by their love of the craft. The art-jewelry world is full of people who made the choice to work as jewelers not out of economic need, but out of desire. They could make better livings in management or sales, but they stick with jewelry-making.

As any good jeweler knows, it's a hard choice to sustain. The craft is a tough taskmaster. Jewelry-making is difficult to learn, time-consuming to practice, and hard to justify to a public that equates handmade objects with mass-produced trash of any kind. It's a craft that demands that you do your best even when you don't feel like it – perhaps especially when you don't feel like it. It's a craft of self-discipline and deferred gratification. Sometimes one must work for days or weeks without pleasure, hoping that a payoff will arrive.

The payoff, of course, takes different forms for different people. For some it is in the absorption of concentrated labor, something akin to the *alpha* state. For some it is the testing of their own limits, and the knowledge that they have succeeded at a difficult task. For some it is the simple knowledge of having done something well. But for everybody, I think, part of the payoff comes from having invested one's care in the first place. Love is truly its own reward.

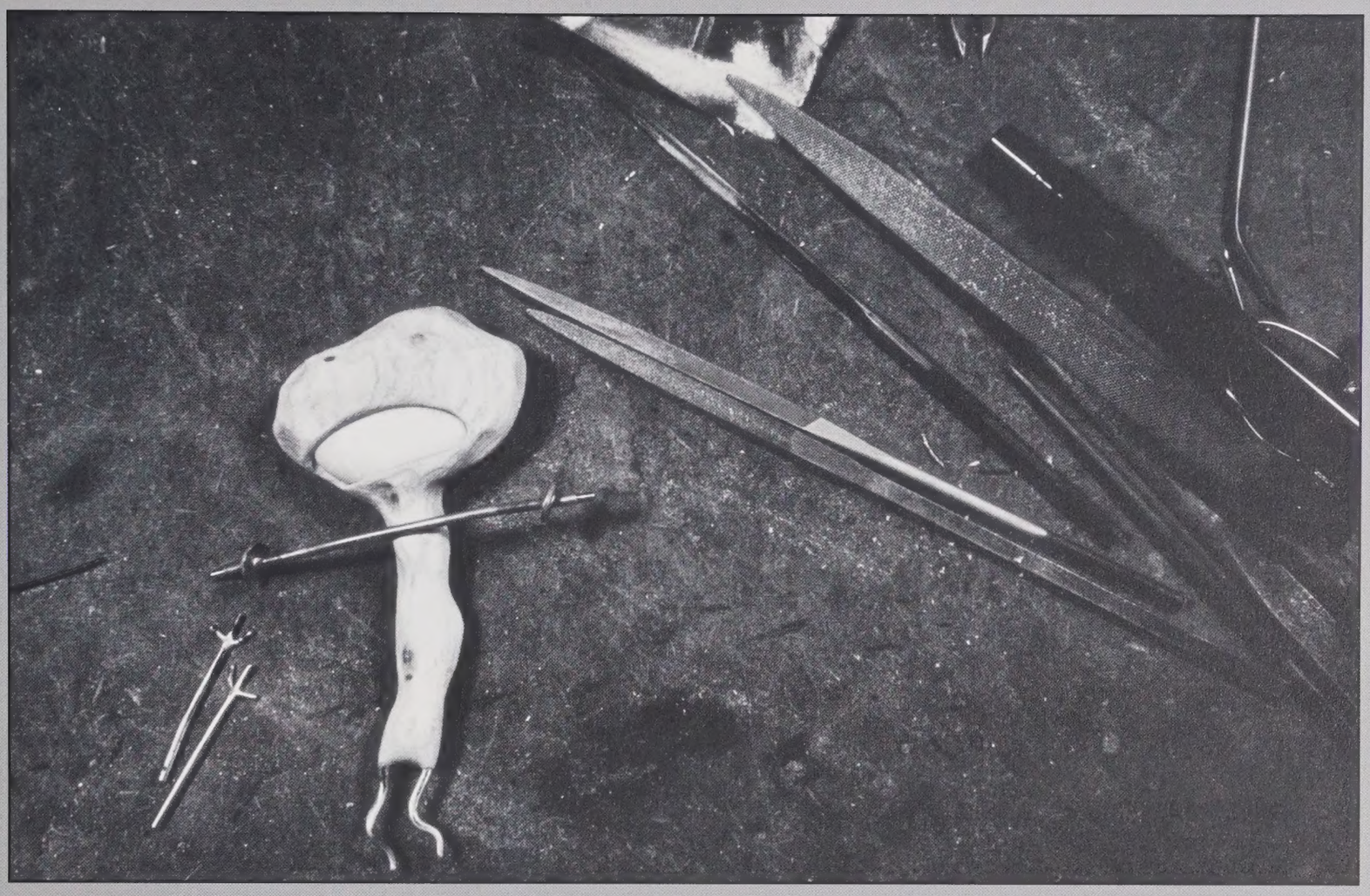
The business of caring is difficult to explain. Why do we care? Science is at a loss to describe the cognitive process of learning to care about something, and analysis seems to get us nowhere. My suspicion is that passion for one's craft springs from the correspondence between the skills demanded by the work and the different cognitive abilities hard-wired in the brain. It also has to do with whatever one finds fascinating, challenging, and satisfying. But in the end, learning to care about one's work taps into a deep well of psychic energy. Many of the choices any individual makes flow from that fountain of energy, including most of our artistic decisions – no matter how much we disguise those choices with artspeak.

When the most articulate jewelers and metalsmiths talk publicly about their work, few ever mention why they chose the field in the first place, and why they continue to make jewelry and craft-based objects. They speak in the sophisticated language of semiotics, deconstruction, and feminism, but they refuse to discuss their own motivations. It's as if they are embarrassed by the subject, or struck dumb by their own emotional condition. Should we speak of love and passion? How *retardataire!*

Personally, I have come to believe that present-day studio craft is built on a foundation of caring, of love for one's work. Nobody reading this magazine is a craftsman by necessity, but by choice – and that choice is made for emotional reasons, not logical ones. So, the craftsman/intellectual who refuses to speak about their passion, is denying the source of many aspects of their work. More and more, I find this denial dishonest.

I look forward to the day when people can speak about their love for the craft openly, but without mushiness or psychobabble. When that day comes, we can begin to talk about the true meaning of craft in the 21st century. But not until then.

Bruce Metcalf lives, labors, and loves in Philadelphia, PA.



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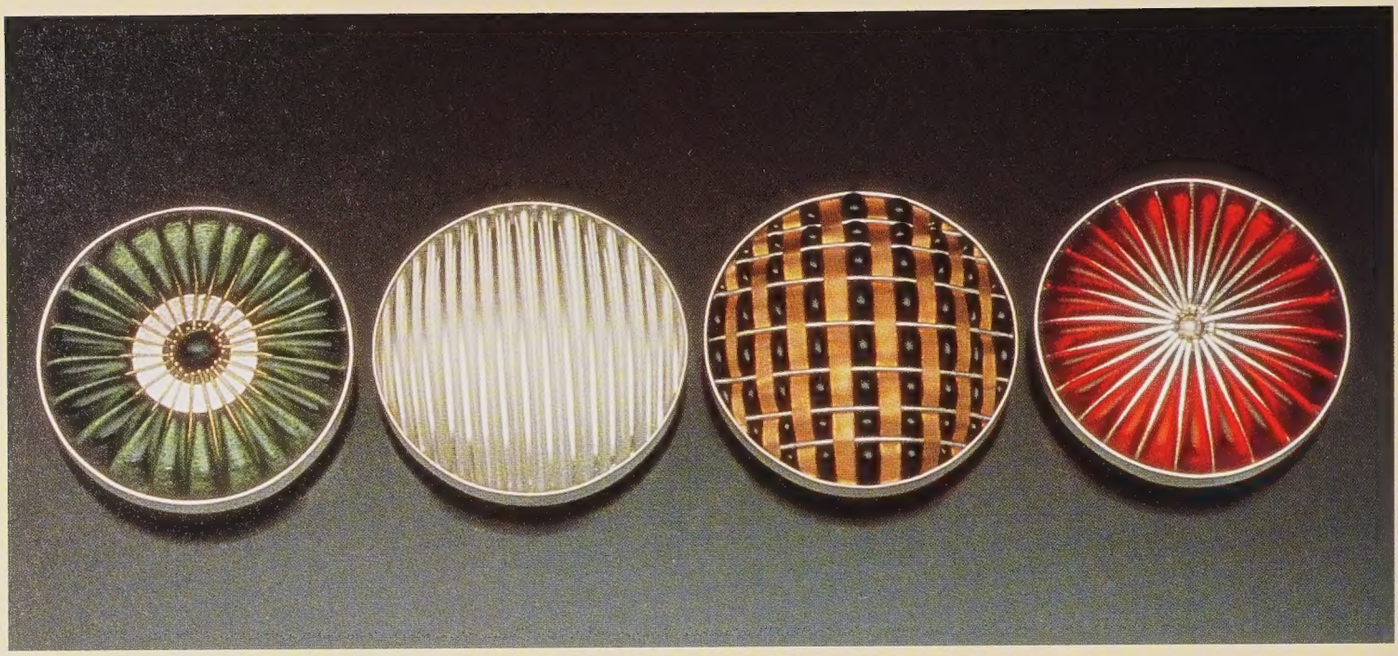


Julie Mihalisin's Marriage of Metal and Glass

Text by Karen S. Chambers

"It's one of those childhood memories that doesn't escape you, but I remember being a kid, and I don't remember what it was about, but having my mom say, 'Oh, it's just glass and thinking, 'What do you mean, it's so beautiful.'"

That's how jeweler Julie Anne Mihalisin thought about glass growing up in Philadelphia. Today her silver, gold, and glass brooches evoke the same reaction: It's just glass and it's so beautiful. That response would satisfy Mihalisin because she's a "real truth-to-materials kind of girl" and "...even though beauty is a *dirty* word in some people's minds, for me, that's what I'm looking for."

But just as glass has never been *just glass* in Mihalisin's mind, her jewelry is not *just* jewelry. That doesn't mean that she makes unwearable sculptural statements. On the contrary, she is extremely aware of practical considerations, including the weight and fragility of her chosen material. She is also concerned with formal sculptural issues. She originally chose to work with glass and metal because of their complementary qualities, the transparency of the glass playing off the opacity of the metal. "Glass slumped around metal is such a wonderful juxtaposition of two unique materials," Mihalisin explains. "Metal is so structural; so manmade; so geometric; although it doesn't have to be; very cold and mechanical. Glass is warm; it's human; it's organic." Yet glass and metal also share many characteristics; glass is even referred to as a metal in its molten state.

Despite the original aesthetic impetus and the beautiful, perfectly composed, and skillfully crafted appearance of Mihalisin's work, it is content driven. Its abstract form is a vehicle for Mihalisin's musings on the concept of preciousness and value, made more potent by the form her work currently assumes – jewelry.

Mihalisin's approach is not the well-worn one of using nonprecious materials in a medium traditionally considered precious. "My goal," Mihalisin explains, "is to end up with jewelry that looks like it is made of glass and precious metals, in that order, thus putting the concept of preciousness in aesthetic rather than financial order."

The preciousness comes not from the intrinsic value of glass, but rather from the uniqueness it acquires when subjected to Mihalisin's favored, and now signature, process of slumping – heating glass to the point when the glass begins to soften and sag, but before it has reached an amorphous molten state. Glass when slumped creates an unreproducible result. It is unique and that makes it more valuable and beautiful than diamonds to Mihalisin. "What I think is interesting about my work and what interests me about my work is the fact that every time I slump a piece of glass into a piece of metal, what comes out the other end is going to be different."

The artist's choice of the word *metal* rather than specifying *gold* and *silver* is revealing. Although they could be seen as a counterpoint to the common material of glass, reinforcing her concern with the concept of value, gold and silver are used because they simply work better for the slumping process than a nonprecious material such as steel.

Left, top
Brooch Pendants, 1995
glass, silver, 24k
2 x 2 x ⅜"

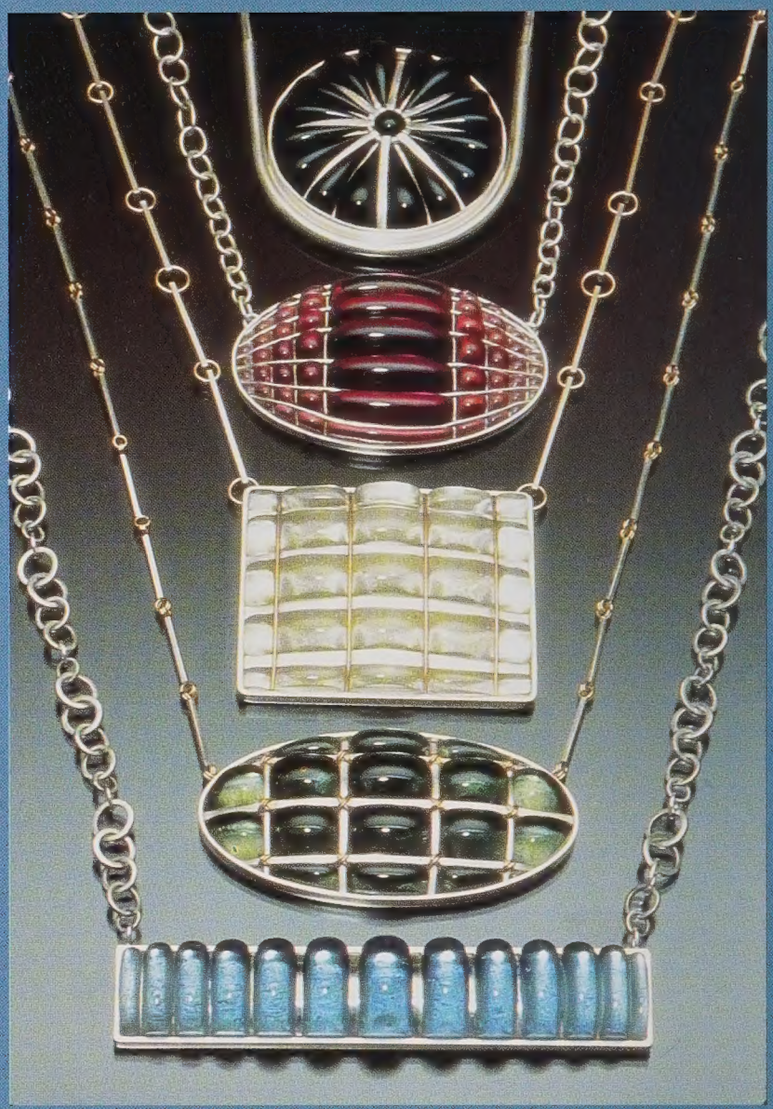
Left, bottom
Necklace with removable Brooches, 1995
glass, silver, 18k, 24k, copper
from: ½ – 2¾",
Adjustable chain 21 – 41"

Photographs by Douglas Yaple

Right
Necklaces, 1996
glass, silver, golds
from ¾ to 4", 18" chains

Below
Brooches, 1995
glass, silver, 18k, 24k, copper
from: ½ – 2¾"

Photographs by Douglas Yaple



Right, top to bottom

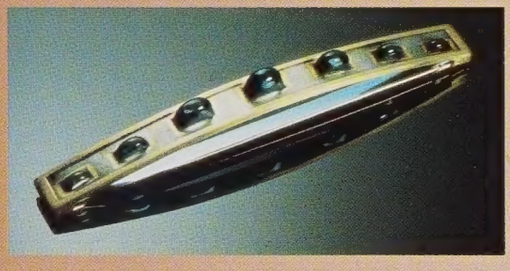
Necklace, (detail) 1994
glass, golds, silver
9¼ x 8 x 1"

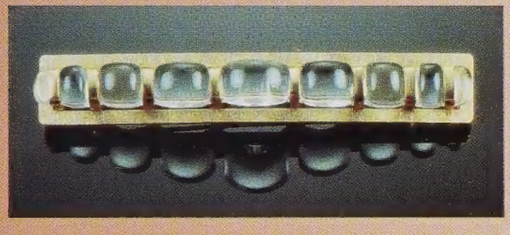
Brooch, 1994
glass, golds, silver
½ x 5¼ x ¾"

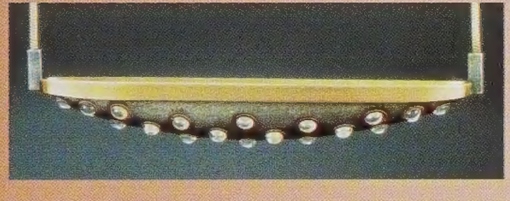
Brooch, 1994
glass, 18k, 24k
½ x 3¾ x ¾"

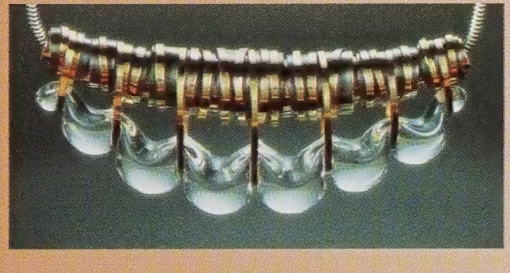
Necklace, 1994
glass, golds, silver
¾ x 4¼ x 1"

Necklace, 1994
glass, silver, 18k
1½ x 3½ x ¾"









Photographs by the artist

Slumping also embodies something more valuable for Mihalisin than diamonds or gold: time. The process arrests a moment, recording tangibly and permanently something that is elusive and fleeting. "I've always thought being able to freeze a moment in time was wonderful. It talks about movement, about life," the artist stated.

Unlike many artists who always knew what they wanted to do and were supported in their decision from an early age, Mihalisin grew up in a "family of academics." Her father taught physics at Temple University and her mother was an elementary school reading specialist. In her home art was considered something that was done as a hobby, not a career. After graduating from high school and a short hiatus, Mihalisin applied to Tyler School of Art, leaving her fate to the admissions committee. She was accepted and graduated in 1987 with a BFA in jewelry design and metalsmithing.

Mihalisin recalls that she came to jewelry as a result of "a process of elimination. I had taken ceramics, fibers, graphic design, painting, and almost everything they had to offer. Then I tried jewelry and I knew! Tyler had one of the best facilities around and I was exposed to just about every metals technique you can imagine." Stanley Lechtzin was her teacher at Tyler, and she calls him "an incredible professor, so dedicated, so knowledgeable. I really can't imagine getting a better education than I got at Tyler and then going to the RCA."

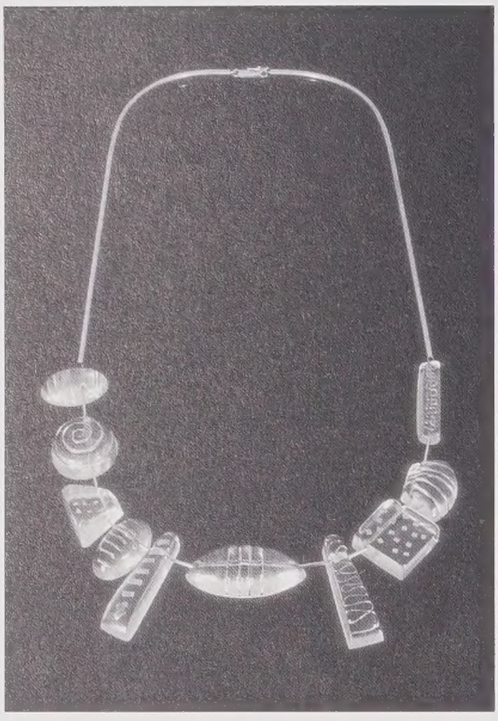
Mihalisin had tried glass at Tyler, but it was not a happy experience. In her introduction to glass blowing, she burned her hand so badly that she had to drop out of school. That was enough glass for her until her graduate studies in metalwork at the Royal College of Art in London. She chose the RCA because the department was large enough to offer more than one aesthetic point of view. David Watkins (the head of the department) was Mihalisin's personal tutor and there were several part-time tutors plus four full-time technicians. In addition to the faculty, Watkins invited well-known jewelers and metalsmiths from around the world to do short-term residencies, so students were exposed to even more ideas and techniques.

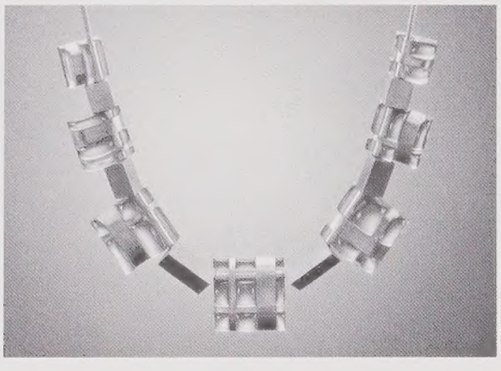
It was at the RCA that Mihalisin began to combine glass and metal. The Platinum Society was sponsoring a competition for first-year jewelry students with a £1000 prize for the best design using platinum paired with an unusual material. In a brainstorming session with the British artist Jacqueline Mina, Mihalisin told her how she "loved the juxtaposition of something transparent with something opaque. She suggested 'What about glass?' That's where I began my experimentation."

Watkins sent her to the glass department where one of the part-time tutors was the sculptor Keith Cummings and with his guidance Mihalisin began experimenting with glass and metal in the fall of 1987. She began with pods of copper and cut slots that the glass could be slumped through. "We started out doing really crude experiments," she recalls. "We were doing things that were six or eight inches long. I kept wanting to try to get smaller and he kept thinking how could you get smaller."

After six months of constant experimentation, spending more time in the glass department than in the metals studio, Cummings encouraged her to continue her explorations on her own. "He was wonderful, very, very helpful, but much that I did and do now, I had to figure out on my own," Mihalisin explains. "Some of the things that I discovered are things that are already known and used typically in glass slumping and then there are other things that I found out for myself, like what I can get away with..."

When Mihalisin was a student at the RCA and beginning her experiments with slumping glass in a metal framework, she was unaware of the work of the American glass sculptors Sydney Cash, known for his lyrical draperies of glass on delicate wire armatures, and Mary Shaffer whose sculptures are bolder paintings of glass and metal, sometimes slumping glass through wire grids or from found tools. Although her work has been warmly received in the glass world (the Corning Museum of Glass purchased three pieces of her earliest mature work) Mihalisin has only recently joined that community. In the fall of 1994 she moved to Seattle, the American center for Studio Glass. Seattle was consciously chosen because "it was a glass community. I felt that I needed to learn more about glass. I have seven years of higher education in metal arts. I'm not saying that I know it all, but I didn't feel I needed as much additional information as I did in the glass." She now works in a building that houses glass painter Cappy Thompson's studio and Ann Welch's glass-blowing shop.





The specific qualities of glass and how it behaves are paramount to Mihalisin's art on a conceptual and formal basis. Talking about her work, Mihalisin says, "I like making pieces that take a form or a concept and repeat it over and over again with just one detail changing...emphasizing the uniqueness of the glass and the process."

That process brings to mind two artists: Lynda Benglis and Sol LeWitt. Mihalisin shares Benglis's obsession with process although Benglis's works tend to be raw and less refined. Aiming for a progressively graduated series of tearlike droops for a brooch, Mihalisin rejected all uneven results, slumping glass until it behaved as she wanted it to.

Like the Minimalist LeWitt, Mihalisin works in series, each one building on its predecessor. She explores many permutations of an idea before moving on. Since her graduation from the RCA in 1989 and returning to the U.S., she has created four bodies of work that she casually calls "*droop*, *bead*, *inlaid*, and *current*." Each series is based on an exploration of a specific technique, combining increasingly complicated metalwork with slumped glass. But regardless of the form that her work takes, it is always about preciousness.

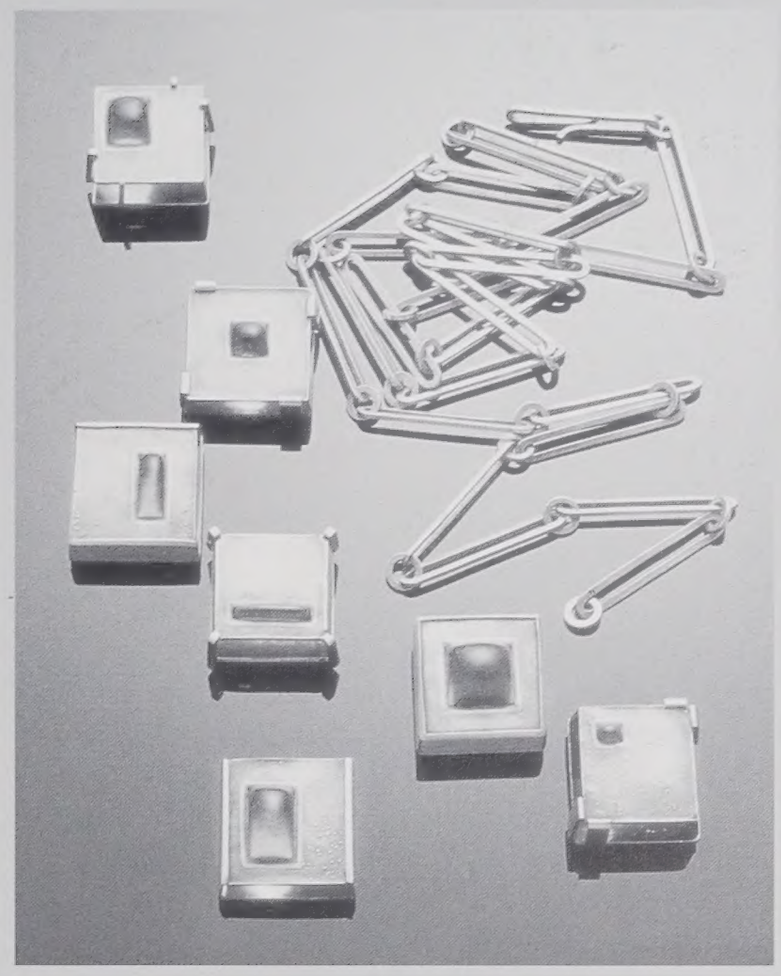
The *droop* series from the early 1990s is Mihalisin's most direct in terms of process and materials. Every element is expressed in a straightforward manner. In a brooch from 1994, the *truth-to-materials* Mihalisin is apparent. With gold wire over copper bands, she *tied* a slumped glass element to a silver bar. The glass was slumped to organically echo the subtle diamond shape of the silver bar. The slumped form is also very direct, as simple a physical expression of the process as is possible, yet one that is carefully controlled; each droplet of glass on either side of the central drop matches its partner.

The *droop* series clearly articulated Mihalisin's concern with process and took the form of very wearable sculpture. In the next series, Mihalisin explored a common jewelry format: the bead. Mihalisin defines *bead* as an object that can be strung on a chain. Silver or gold was draped in investment molds and glass was slumped into the metal form with an opening for the chain.

The shapes are very dimensional. In a 1993 necklace each of the five sushi-like beads could be described as glass banded with silver, but each one is different. In several the glass is held by thin wires crossing the form or containing it in a grid. In others the glass oozes from slender slits in the metal.

Even though Mihalisin was trained as a metalsmith, in the *droop* and *beads*, she concentrated on mastering glass, testing its limits. In the works she calls *inlaid*, metal began to play a more significant role. She made a married-metal form by using a two-part epoxy-steel mold in a hydraulic press. Using the gold outlines on the pressed shape as a guide, she cut openings for the glass to be slumped through. The forms tended to be geometric, often grids or spokes – "common objects," she explains. "The glass reacts in a natural way, a common material bringing life to a common form." In the *inlaid* works the organic quality of the glass, while still present, was more controlled by the metal framework and began to take on a more gemlike quality, something that Mihalisin tried to lessen by her choice of colors.

With the *inlaid* works, Mihalisin also began to offer the wearer a chance to participate more actively. In a necklace of seven darkened silver squares, each with a rectangle or square of glass bulging through an opening outlined in gold, the individual parts can be arranged in any sequence, adding or subtracting them as the wearer wishes. They can also be worn as brooches. This adds a gamelike quality to the rather austere but elegant components and helps to emphasize Mihalisin's preoccupation with permutation. The openings for the glass vary in shape, size, and location on the square. Banding the squares are borders of gold-sometimes completely surrounding the square, at other times stopping short. This piece brings to mind the Minimalist painter Robert Ryman. His career has been based on a series of square white paintings of different sizes, media, and surface texture (smooth or distinctly brushed), fastened to the wall with a variety of metal or tape attachments. He has reduced painting to its basics – (non)color, support, hanging device – and created a compelling body of work. Mihalisin employs a similar strategy.



Above, left to right

Brooche Necklace, 1995
glass, silver, golds
2" brooches, 22" chain

Necklace/Brooches
glass, silver, 18k, 24k
1 x 1 x ½", 35" chain

Photographs by Douglas Yaple

Left, top to bottom

Necklace, 1991
glass, 18k, 24k
12½ x 5½ x ½"

Necklace, 1994
glass, silver, 18k, 24k
1 x 1 x ½", 35" chain

Photographs by the artist

In Mihalisin's newest work, she is striving to combine the "raw honesty of (my) early works with the practicality of the recent." The metalwork is finer and more delicate than in previous series. The glass does not look inauthentically precious as in the *inlaid* works. Glass again asserts both itself and its ability to symbolize time. This series draws on all that Mihalisin has previously learned.

In a 1995 work, eight components can be worn either on the adjustable chain or as brooches, again clearly involving the wearer in Mihalisin's game of theme and variation. Each element is an ovoid or circle and the sizes vary from ½" to 2¾" in diameter. Their orientation may be changed from horizontal to vertical. Embellished with various types of decoration, metal bands of 18k and 24k, silver, and copper constrain the glass. The glass is clear, amethyst, or amber in color, but the swelling forms achieved by slumping belie any allusion to gemstones. It is much more complicated work than Mihalisin's previous pieces, more decorative; but the formal expression and skilled craftsmanship remains subordinate to Mihalisin's intellectual concerns, the notion of preciousness and what is truly valuable – time.

Karen Chambers is a frequent contributor to Metalsmith *and other craft interest magazines. She lives in New York, New York.*

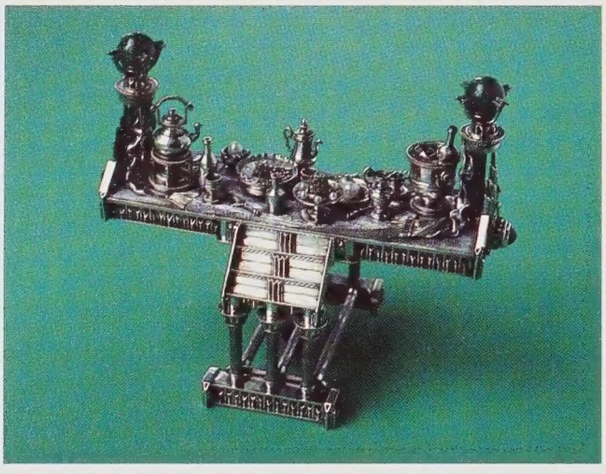
Silver and Electrum

TEXT BY JAMES B. EVANS

What were you doing in June 1971? Are you still doing it today, 25 years later, and in the same place? Barbara Cartlidge is.

And if that name does not immediately strike a chord in your memory then surely the address will: 21 South Molton Street. For there cannot be many jewellers and goldsmiths in North America – or indeed the world – who are unfamiliar with Electrum Gallery in London, England. It is there that Barbara Cartlidge has been conducting her business and making an invaluable contribution to the field of contemporary jewellery for over two decades.

For owner/director Cartlidge, Electrum's 25th Anniversary in June of 1996 was another milestone in her lifelong association with jewellery. Her initial encounters with the medium were in the 1930s when she made her first bracelets, ashtrays, and bookends in school in Germany. But, as the odious clouds of Nazism descended over the country, she was forced to flee to England where she took up residence in 1938. During the War she took a succession of secretarial jobs, 22 in one year alone, from which she says she learned much about how and how not to run a business.



Richard Mawdsley
Feast Bracelet, 1974
sterling, jade, pearls
4½"
Collection: Renwick Gallery,
National Museum
of American Art, Smithsonian

In the post-war period she ran a restaurant and became involved with various leftist activist causes which would later assume a fateful role in her life. But in 1957, at the instigation of her husband Derek, who was running a successful transport business, she enrolled at the Central School of Arts and Crafts where she studied metal and jewellery.

Upon completion of the course she set up a studio at home and was soon taking jewellery commissions. In 1961 she had a very successful one-woman show at the fashionable Heals Department Store in London. This lead to her involvement with the Ewan Phillips Gallery which was one of the first fine art galleries in London to exhibit and sell modern jewellery. It was there that she met Ralph Turner.[1]

In the meantime the British Peace Committee which she was involved with, decided to open a gallery in St. Christopher's Place and sell arts and crafts in order to fund various liberal causes. The gallery was named Pace and was linked to various peace organizations in Western and Eastern Europe. This consortium drew on an impressive group of like-minded artists who donated works to be sold at the gallery. Picasso, for example, donated the rights of his ceramic pieces to the French Peace Committee. Pace Gallery was run by a committee that included Barbara and she soon recruited Ralph into the organization. He suggested that they should sell modern jewellery at Pace, a policy they instituted. But Cartlidge found herself at increasing odds with the rest of the committee and became determined to open a gallery of her own, dealing uniquely with contemporary jewellery. Thus, Electrum was born.

With Barbara Cartlidge as sole owner and with overall responsibility and Ralph Turner as Director, the two launched the first gallery dedicated to contemporary jewellery on Summer Solstice, June 21, 1971.[2]

They recruited artists and built the business step by step. "I went in naively," she says. "In spite of my familiarity with other business operations, I didn't foresee the problems that I would have. I never thought any of these things that plagued others could happen to me."

As to her choice of location in the very exclusive part of London that is South Molton Street she explains, "I could never have opened anywhere else but in the middle of the West End because you have to be realistic enough to know who your clients are likely to be. Despite all of my revolutionary ideas, they were going to be a middle- and upper-class, reasonably well-off clientele. I do of course, have clients who are not well-off and who pay in installments over a long period of time for the pieces that they want but these remain an enlightened few."

Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski
Gene Michael Pijanowski
Wall Piece with Removablew Brooch, 1976
brass, copper, fine silver, shakudo,
Plexiglass®, carved, inlaid, fabricated
12 x ½"

Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski
Gene Michael Pijanowski
Gladiator, (pendant), 1976
pink tourmaline, garnets, shakudo, copper, sterling,
gold, chased/repousséd, fabricated
4 x 2 x ¾"
Collection: Sandra Grotta, NJ

Electrum Gallery has not only survived but has it has thrived. Testimony to this can be discerned by the fact that of all the businesses on that exclusive pedestrian street she is now the second oldest tenant in a neighbourhood, where the oldest tenant only opened six months before Electrum.

In a conversation I wondered aloud if Electrum could have happened and survived in say, New York? Cartlidge responded: "No, because you have to be internationally central and you need customers from all over the world. If you were in New York you would miss out on all the Europeans who never make it to the States. If you were in Los Angeles the same – you'd probably miss a lot of East Coast customers. If you were in Paris, there are still a lot of people who come to England and who don't go to Paris or Germany or anywhere else. That's why no one has even been able to get together the size of a gallery I have because I am geographically in the hub of the wheel. That's why people going to Paris come to London first – it's cheaper that way anyway. I have clients who literally fly into London, take a cab to the gallery, make a purchase and then return to Heathrow to reconnect with their flight elsewhere. Without that kind of thing happening I wouldn't have survived even at this level. This kind of jewellery needs the widest possible accessibility."

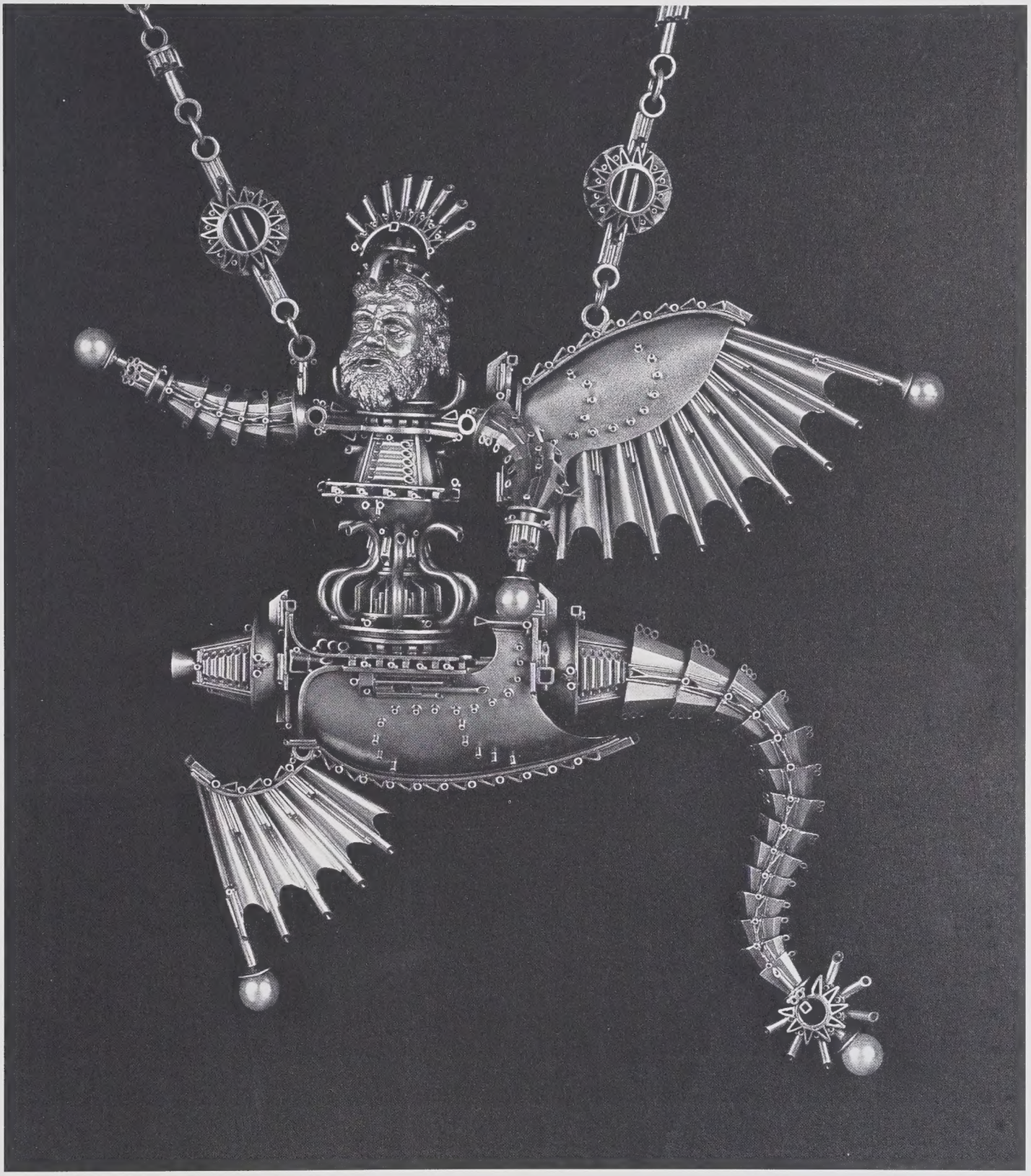
Electrum continues to be unique. Part educational resource centre, part launching pad for new jewellers, part museum, it continues to have six exhibitions annually. Group shows, two- or three-person shows and more unusually one-person shows have all been presented. Works by almost all of the now well-known goldsmiths in the world have been exhibited here and more than usually presented for the first time. Jewellery has been exhibited at Electrum from Argentina, the former Czechoslovakia, Japan, Poland, Scandinavia, Greece, Australia, Canada, and many other countries spanning the globe. Barbara states that she has had 150 exhibitions, "150 headaches" and has presented the work of well over 650 individual jewellers. Without a doubt a singular achievement in the field and quite a record of artistic assimilation and promotion.

The first American works to be shown at Electrum were pieces by Ed Samuels and Omar K. Bone, which were included in *Erotic Jewellery* in 1971, the second exhibition ever held there. In 1976 there was an exhibition entitled *6 American Jewellers* which included Eleanor Moty, Arline Fisch, Mary Lee Hu, Richard Mawdsley, and Hiroko and Gene Pijanowski. This transatlantic relationship has continued through the years and most prominent American jewellers have shown there, the latest being Arline Fisch and Stanley Lechtzin in the 25th Anniversary show. Wishing to tease out some feelings about American work vis-à-vis European work, I asked her about the two and if she agreed with my contention that one could invariably identify the two sensibilities even when viewing unidentified slides.

"Oh yes, definitely, I felt that there was a time when there was a great divergence, partially because of communication, partially because conditions in America are so different. In the States most artists who are professionally into jewellery are having to teach and not having to make their living as purely working jewellers, although that is nowadays becoming the case for European artists as well. Though they had a greater freedom in America, in many ways they were also spread apart geographically and communication and exchange was in its infancy. ... it made a big difference when that changed. Before that I felt that it was very arty-crafty in America and a bit pretentious if anything – trying to be something that it was not. This is difficult to substantiate, of course, but it was very massive jewellery, very big. It seemed to follow in the tradition of Calder but, of course, this was more appropriate to the American way of life – there's more space, people are bigger, they're bolder, wear much more modern clothes than Europe ever did. So in terms of just its [the jewellery's] sheer size it was difficult to come to grips with. It was more flamboyant in a way, but also flatter in content, more decorative in visual appeal. But nowadays it has merged much more. ...the Europeans have become bolder, they went through this minimal phase where everything was minute and understated and now it has become much bigger again and the Americans have become more proportionate and there's some very fine work being done there. Mind you, there always has been."

In 1974 Barbara Cartlidge and Ralph Turner parted company. He became Head of Exhibitions at the Crafts Council, where he promoted and exhibited a more radical group of jewellery experimenters, among them: Pierre Degen, Julia Mannheim, Susanna Heron, and Caroline Broadhead. He has also worked closely with Paul Derrez of Galerie Ra in Amsterdam to bring many new Dutch and German artists to the fore. It was during this period, roughly 1978-1984,

Richard Mawdsley
Neptune Pendant, 1974
sterling silver, pearls, fabricated and cast
4½ x 4¼ x ⅞"
Collection: Evansville Museum of Art
and Science, Indiana



Mary Lee Hu
Neckpiece #12A, 1974
sterling silver, lacquered copper
14" long

Mary Lee Hu
Choker #18, 1976
fine and sterling silvers,
12k filled brass

that Electrum's exhibition policy came under some pointed criticism for its alleged failure to engage with this particular body of work. It seemed to some that Electrum could no longer sustain its claim to be the premier showcase of all that was new and innovative in jewellery. Cartlidge, however, strongly disagrees.

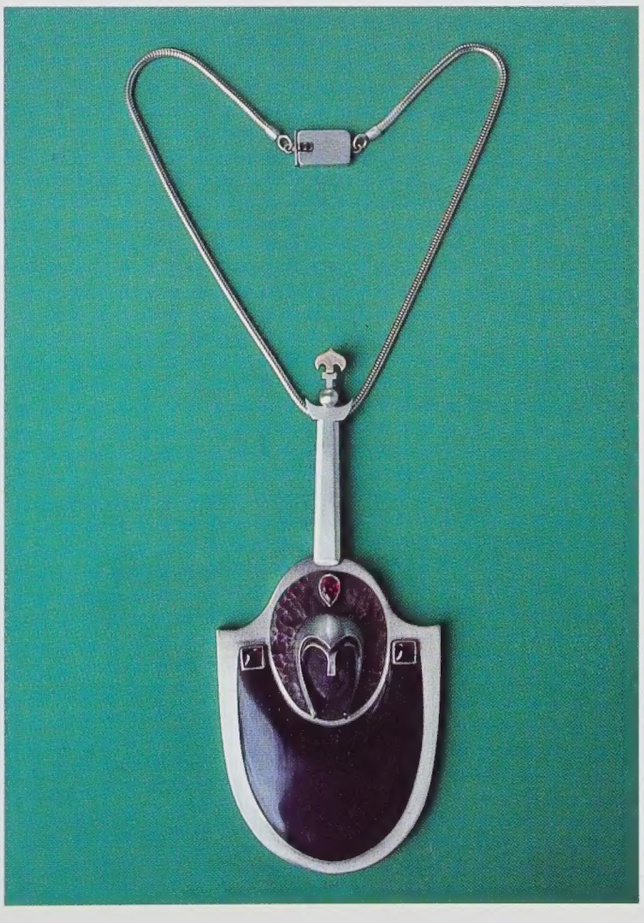
"That was a deliberate policy on my part. I think that that kind of jewellery had run itself into a blind alley and I've been proved right. It's dead. It's very hard to define exactly in a few words what was wrong with it, because in a way there's nothing wrong with it. But what isn't right is to purely describe as *jewellery* what you could perhaps best, if you need to categorize it, put into the area of *installation.* It is about as far removed from jewellery as you can get. It just isn't. It is installation. It is a statement from an artist but it does not actually do anything for jewellery or people's understanding of jewellery because it is out of proportion, non-functional; and I have to be honest that many of the examples were questionable in terms of art content and concept as far as I was concerned. All it did was perplex people and art is not actually there to perplex. If it is at all there then I think it is there to shock and I mean not just to shock for the sake of shocking – but to shock people into a different area of thinking, of seeing, of understanding; and I'm afraid that most of the New Jewellers, and I can't say all of them, but most of them were going totally off the target. They didn't hit it at all."

Taking a pause she chain-lit her umpteenth cigarette, took three quick phone calls (two in her fluent German and one in English) and at the second of hanging up, continued on in her measured but rapid-fire way, as if no interruption had occurred.

"They weren't wearable. They were photographable. I mean no one would deliberately and for no good reason take a load of twigs and put them over their arm and then put a bucket into their hand and walk down the road for the sake of ... what? They would for the sake of picking up more twigs and putting them into the bucket and burning the rest that are on their shoulders maybe. But it has nothing to do with jewellery. It is an installation if you like, and it did make

TOP
Eleanor Moty
Lightning, (box), 1972
sterling, brass, bronze, copper,
14k, agate, photo-printed leather
5¼ x 3½ x 2"
top view and interior view
of photo-printed leather

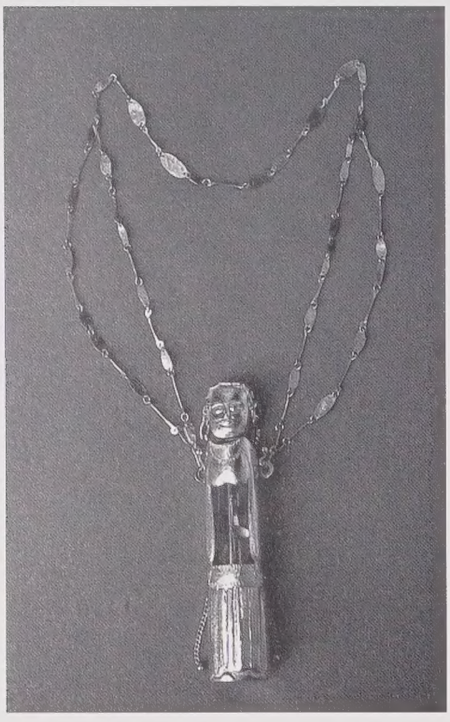
ABOVE
Eleanor Moty
Dual Image, (brooch), 1974
photo-etched silver,
quartz cr;ystal, obsidian
3 x 2¾ x ½"

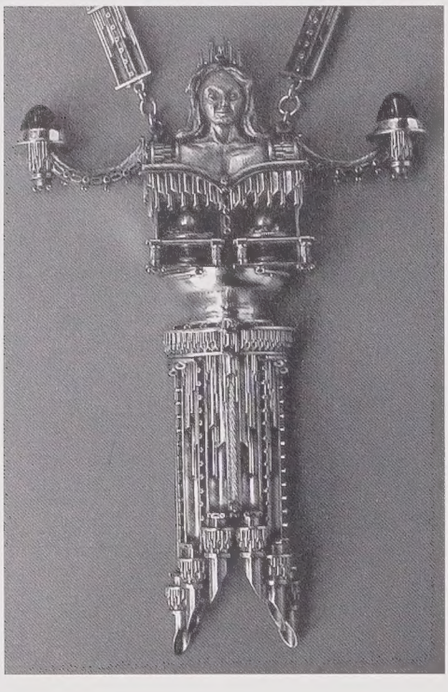


RIGHT
Hiroko Sato-Pijanowski
Gene Michael Pijanowski
Illusion, (wallpiece), 1976
brass, gold plated, carved
8 x ⅜"

LEFT
Arline Fisch
Knitted Lace, (necklet), 1976
knitted lace in fine silver
backsection: sterling,
18k accents, 3 Australian opals
5½ x 3"

FAR LEFT
Arline Fisch
Anthropomorphic,
(necklace), 1975
hairpin lace in fine silver
coated copper clasp: sterling,
copper, reticulated silver,
mokume, agate, tourmalines
4" (with band) x 15"
Collection:
Barbara Rockefeller, 1981





TOP
Arline Fisch
Curly Locks,
(pendant/perfume bottle), 1973
sterling, (chased),
detachable chain, glass bottle
1¼ x 5½"

ABOVE
Richard Mawdsley
Wonder Woman in
Her Bi-Centennial Finery, 1976
sterling, pearls, smoky quartz
5⅜ x ⅝"
Collection: Boardman
Family Collection

people think of the relation of the body to it's environment or in its immediate context, but it was not anything that is even remotely there to make people think of jewellery. I think it was an art school exercise. A flight of fancy, very amusing, very entertaining but not in terms of jewellery. I think that jewellery is something much more personal and is and can be used as an art form, but when it gets disproportionate it loses its point. One of the interesting facts about jewellery as an art form is that it demands of the artist to express within the limits of dimension something that is both tactile, informative, emotionally felt, intellectually understandable, and, if you like, even shocking. But it doesn't do this when it becomes disproportionate. When art starts to alienate people and they only say it's art because they actually don't understand it there is a problem. I'm interested in jewellery as it relates to the human psyche even more than how it relates to the human body."

"But I do think these things were interesting in a one-off situation. It was good to stimulate the minds of people who thought they were going into a jewellery exhibition to buy themselves a little trinket. But you can only make a statement about this kind of thing once and to then perpetuate it and incorporate it into a gallery situation is incredibly boring. To have blown them up out of proportion and to turn them into a major contribution to the contemporary jewellery field is to my mind completely off. It was total hype; the Emperor's New Clothes."

She may be at least partially right. Given the current fortunes of the jewellers and jewellery which energized this period and made it seem so enervating it did, in hindsight, seem to have had a degree of obsolescence built into it. It did seem to have imploded.

Furthermore, according to Barbara, "I see it [The New Jewellery movement] as one of the great damages that was done to jewellery, all of that hype. There is a difficulty when young artists start making something that appears really exciting to an older and more established crowd of professionals, journalists, and gallery curators. They get promoted and hyped into something quickly because here is a wonderful new talent on the horizon and they get exposure, articles written, photographs done, catalogues made and suddenly it all comes to a grinding halt because they haven't really worked it all out. The promoters and curators move on to other pastures. I'm afraid that this is exactly what happened to this New Jewellery lot. It did do one thing however; it focused people's minds who were basically only into fine art and would therefore never see a piece of art outside of those traditionally accepted media like sculpture and painting. It did draw their attention to things like jewellery. Although it didn't hold it for long. And they only saw it because they thought, 'Uh-huh, here's something new that I haven't seen before and I'm not sure what it is, therefore it must be art.' But when looked at with hindsight (although as I say, I did see it at the time) when you looked good and hard it was not what it pretended to be and it fizzed out and couldn't go anywhere from there. And it destroyed the people who were actually making it because they felt that they could never measure up to fine art. It dislocated their perspective, it kind of smashed a whole generation. There's an enormous gap between the ones that made it in the '70s and '80s and the ones that are now beginning to actually come up with something new in the '90s. There was a plateau from around 1978 onwards until almost 1990. There's just now beginning to be a new momentum. When *Jewellery Redefined*[3] came out, which I think was a misnomer anyway because there was nothing redefined about it, it finished an entire generation of students who were just beginning to qualify as goldsmiths because when that work gained currency they abandoned their positions and got pulled along a path that led absolutely nowhere."

A glance at the letters columns of this and other significant journals of the period would be sufficient to prove that Cartlidge was (and is) not alone in her judgments. Nevertheless, they are strong and contentious assertions from an unimpeachable and outspoken witness to some four decades of contemporary jewellery.[4]

Quite a few brave, if not foolhardy souls, have opened contemporary jewellery galleries in various cities throughout the Euro-American orbit. Many have come and gone. We remember some fondly, others with bitterness and recrimination. Against improbable odds and a background of two and a half decades of jewellery history, Electrum has remained a touchstone, a certainty in a very volatile and often turbulent scene. One can still wander in and view a credible collection of international work. Now on its Silver Anniversary year, I asked Barbara how and why it has survived?

"Well, I'll tell you. It's a combination of probably unwarranted optimism, a certain quantity of child-like stubbornness and a *force majeur*. I don't like giving something up that has a great many positive aspects to it and so far they've always outweighed the negative ones of this business. I've often felt like chucking it in because it's an enormous responsibility. It's a 7½ day week but it

has tremendous perks. I've had very low times when I've felt very insecure and desperate. It is a very deeply involved activity and I work at it morning, noon, and night in many different capacities from making pouches, to designing and typography, layout and photography, contacting and planning, organizing people and planning PR. You name it, I do it; looking after clients, keeping the whole thing running. It's probably because I can do so many things myself which if I had had to pay for I could not afford that I can survive on a minimum of return. But it's probably because I see jewellery as a very integral part of what people need aside from food and shelter. There is more to life than that and if I can convey that to another person – and I think that is a gallery's job to do this – as well as to be the bridge between the creator's work of art and the audience, then my job is done. Now, I wouldn't say that every piece in the gallery is a work of art because it is not, but some of it is and if I can transmit that to another person that is a tremendous and rewarding thing to do. I find it very satisfying. I meet wonderful people. It's a great job. The essential ingredient of jewellery appeals to a totally different part of the human psyche than a painting or a sculpture and it has an additional function in that it needs to become part of the actual physical surrounding, the immediate personal environment of a person which brings with it both limitations and freedoms. You can say much because it goes very deep and is very personal which is why if you lose that personal element, like in an installation for example, you've lost contact with whoever was turned on to jewellery in the first place."

"Jewellery is an ever fascinating theme. It is – how can I put this? I'm very interested in people's well-being, in people's emotional lives, in people and their contacts and relationships. I think that jewellery plays a terribly important part in all of this and more than, I think, any other art form."

It is the latter commentary, written verbatim from the interview that I had with Barbara at her home in Hampstead, which probably reveals more about why Electrum Gallery has survived in the jewellery field for 25 years than any cash flow analyst could.

And another 25 years?

"I hope that Electrum will go on and that eventually I can find a successor and then it will go on beyond that. I'm not going to be doing it when I'm 100, that's for sure, and that's not an awfully long way off."

All this writer can say to that is: "Don't you believe it!"

James B. Evans is writer on crafts and design for Metalsmith *and various European journals and is currently writing a book on crafts criticism. He is also Senior Lecturer and Head of Jewellery and Metals at the University of Brighton in England.*

Barbara Cartlidge and Electrum Gallery

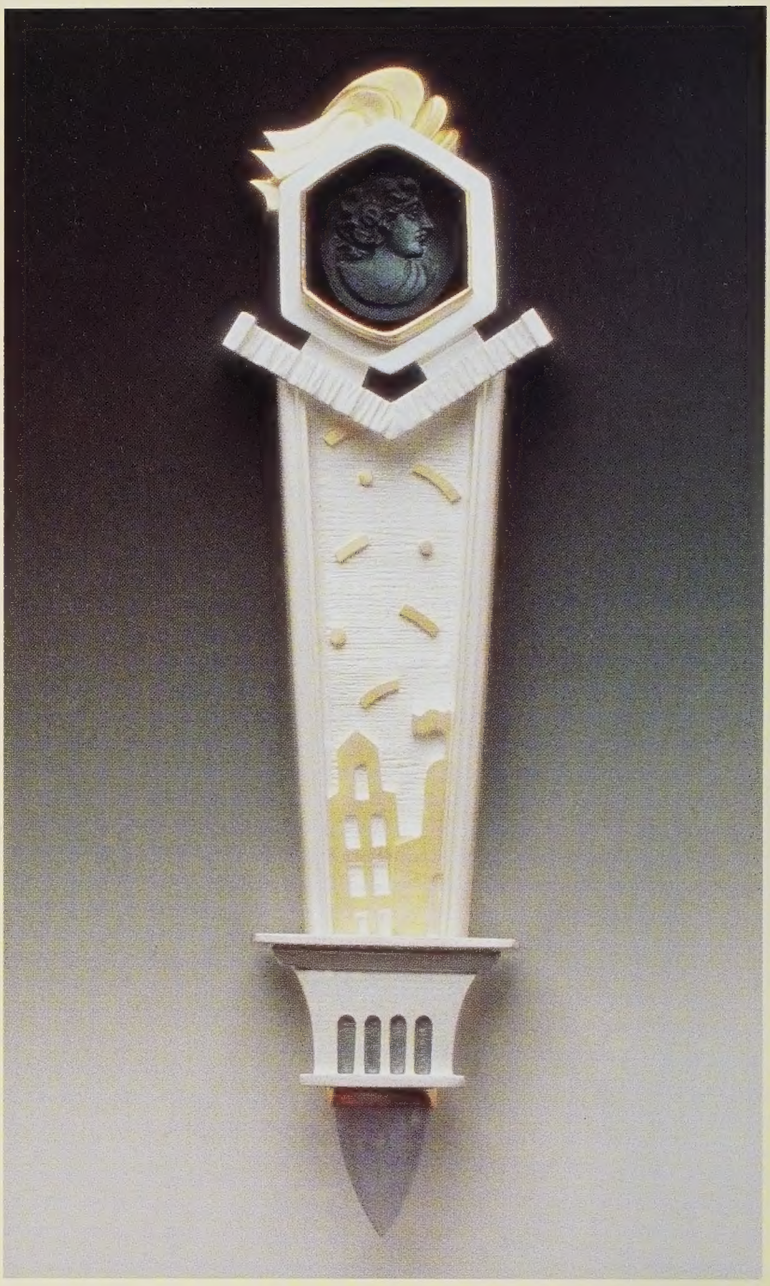
NOTES

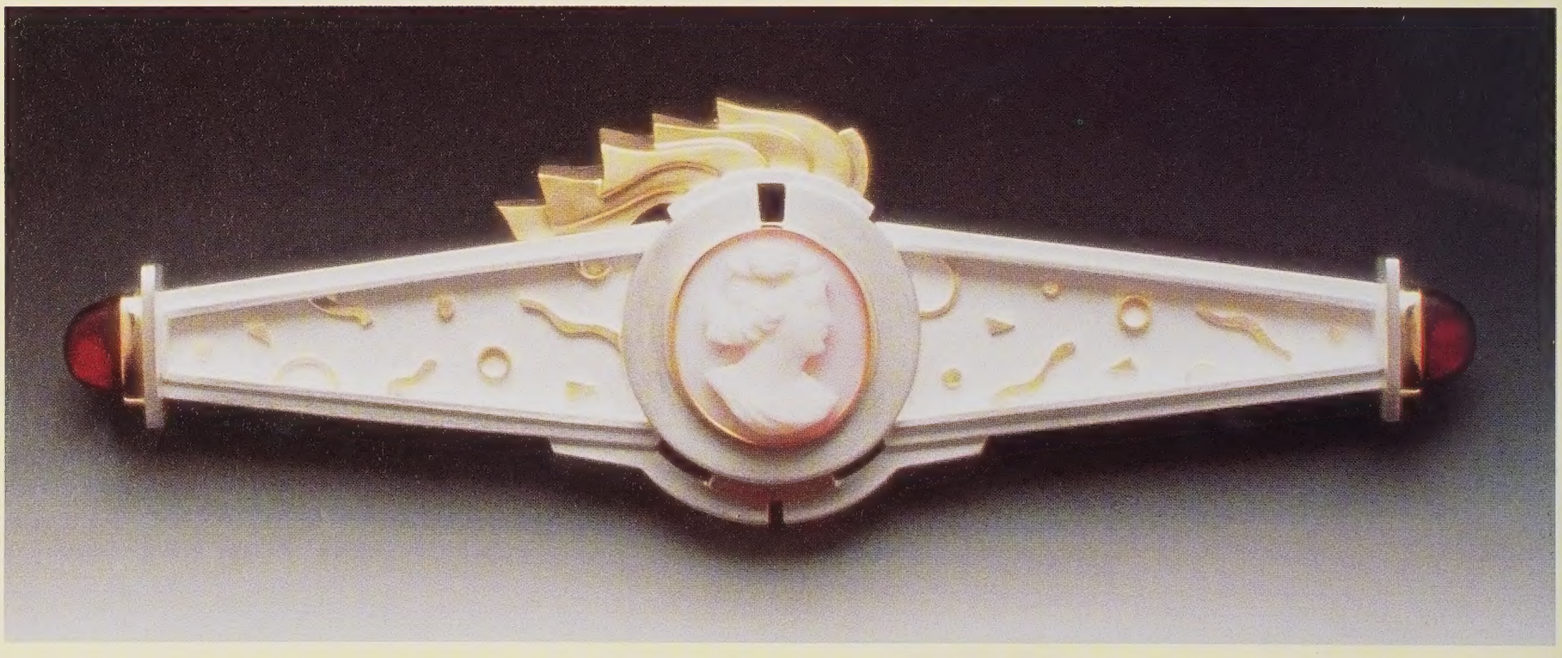
[1] Ralph Turner was later to become the influential Head of Exhibitions at the Crafts Council and also the author of *Contemporary Jewelry: 1945-1975*; co-author, with Peter Dormer, of *The New Jewelry Trends and Traditions*; and the just published *Jewelry in Europe and America: New Times, New Thinking.*

[2] A full acount can be found in the catalogue of *The Innovators: Presenting Past and Present Jewellery*, published to coincide with Electrum's 25th Anniversary and available from Electrum.

[3] A seminal International exhibition of multi-media, non-precious jewellery held in London at the Crafts Council in 1982 and organised by Diana Hughes whose catalogue [now a collectable] became a beacon to many art college jewellery students.

[4] For further study as to what is endorsed in the Cartlidge canon the reader would be well advised to consult her important and well-researched book, *Twentieth Century Jewelry*, published in 1985 which I hope will be revised before the century closes.





So much of contemporary culture is filled with apropriations, reconstructions, and fragmented borrowings from our past that that past seems a fiction, collapsed, confused, fragmented, ersatz, little more than a Disneyland filled with costumes and painted flats. Such arch mining of earlier times maintains a cool detachment, objects are removed from their original contexts and collaged arbitrarily onto the present. The original meanings and significances of things float untethered in a sea of images and forms.

Bill Ruth and Susan Mahlstedt, however, evince a more recuperative attitude toward the past and its patined forms. These collaborators lift a beautifully carved cameo from its original setting and give it new life, not in a postmodern pastiche, but in a contemporary revival, like a careful and sensitive, but practical, remodeling of an old house. Their forms may recall military medals, the tinned wings of a Junior Birdman, or the awards we might have received for winning a spelling bee, back when it was thought essential to spell correctly. These tokens are not reconstructions of objects from some earlier time; they are new constructions of the present that have the power to elicit feelings that we may have thought lost or corrupted by the commodification of nostalgia.

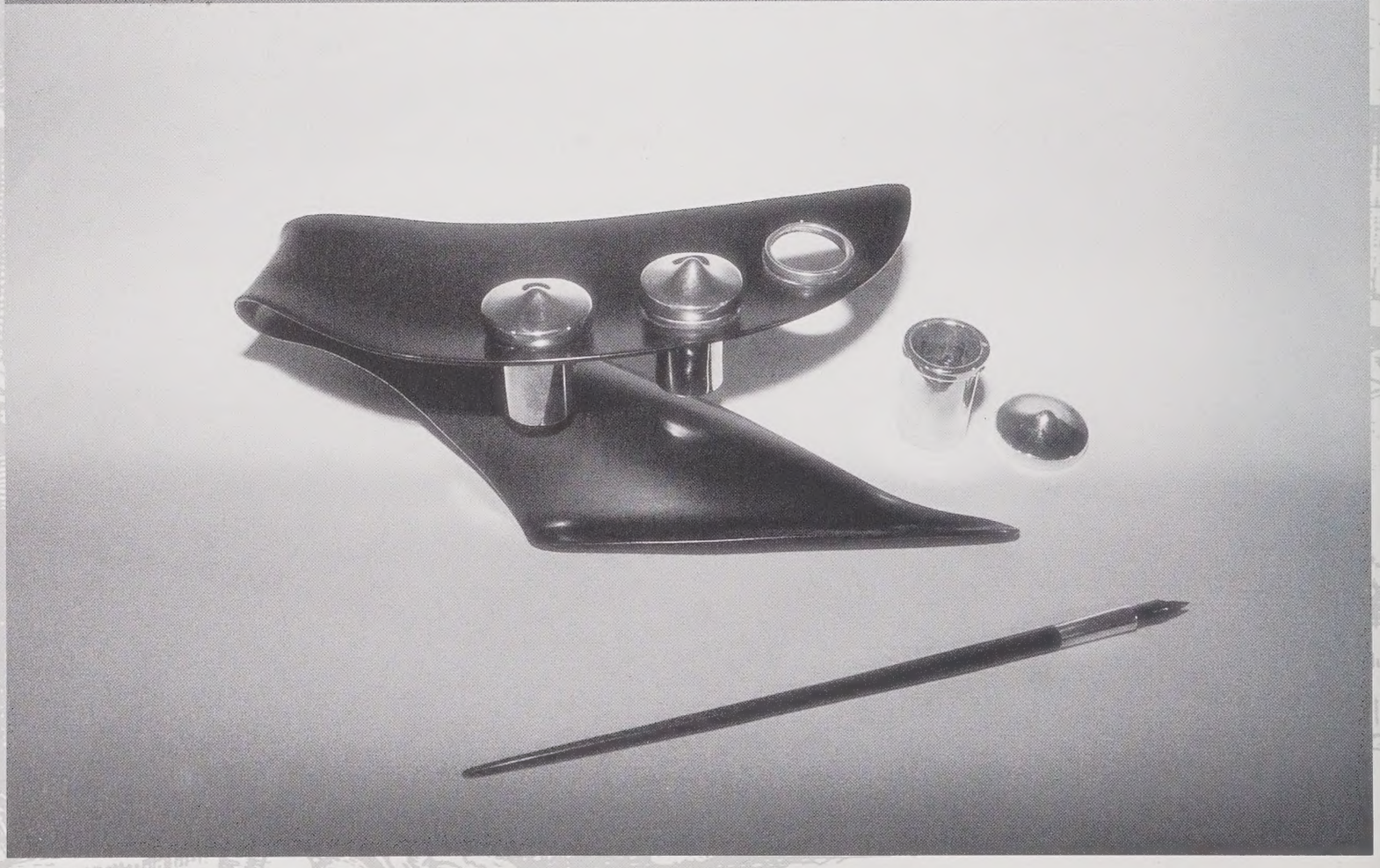
Clockwise, from upper left

Marie Antoinette
shell cameo, amethyst, 18k, sterling silver
3⅛ x 1⅜ x ½"

Roman Elvis (Goes to Washington)
onyx cameo, blue chalcedony, 18k, sterling silver
3¾ x 1⅛ x 7/16"

Flying Magic Cameo
shell cameo, garnets, 18k, sterling silver
1¼ x 4 3/16 x ½"

Bill Ruth and Susan Mahlstedt



Charcoal Dust Bluing

TEXT BY LARRY NIDAY

Sometimes when you are looking for one thing, you discover something else. The unexpected can change your course and you find yourself embarking on a new journey. One such turn of events introduced me to a unique metal finish and restored an old process to new life.

Nearly everyone who has researched history will agree that our ancestors felt little inclination to record details. They seemed to feel that the minutia of everyday life and particularly their work were either uninteresting or, more probably, private. The latter is especially problematic when we look for technical processes.

There is a marked lack of surviving written information on metal coloring as practiced before the 19th century. With the long-established tradition of passing information from generation to generation by word-of-mouth, tradesmen apparently assumed that knowledge handed down would never be lost. Only what they deemed as necessary for the general public to know was included in their writings, details have to be inferred or usually discovered through indirect means.

The Master/Apprentice system caused the loss of many techniques. Processes were jealously withheld from outsiders, and if they went out of use or were replaced by something new, they would quietly disappear. This secrecy prevented much of the information on processes from ever reaching the printed page. It was a sorry apprentice who would divulge his master's secrets and there was a tendency with most of the artisans in the factories to hold back details in order to garner higher esteem for themselves.[1] One example was in the European armories, where both the etching and gilding processes were secrets. When the Hardner was busy doing his work, he would avoid even the presence of his trades Kinsmen.[2]

Finally, the few processes that have been recorded involved vague instructions and exotic chemicals, or mysticism to make them more secret and mysterious. "As is often the case, the few surviving print references did not tell the same story that the surviving objects told."[3] Some parts were included strictly to add mystery while others were disguised methods to ensure care in the process. One such rite was orienting a knife blade due north when plunging it into the quench bath. A practice such as this added an element of mysticism, but at the same time, ensured that the handler would take great care in the process, ensuring consistent results.

LARRY NIDAY

LEFT, TOP
Silver Bowl, 1996
silver, steel, 4 x 14"

LEFT, BOTTOM
Calligrapher's Ink Well & Pen, 1996
silver, steel, 2 x 9"

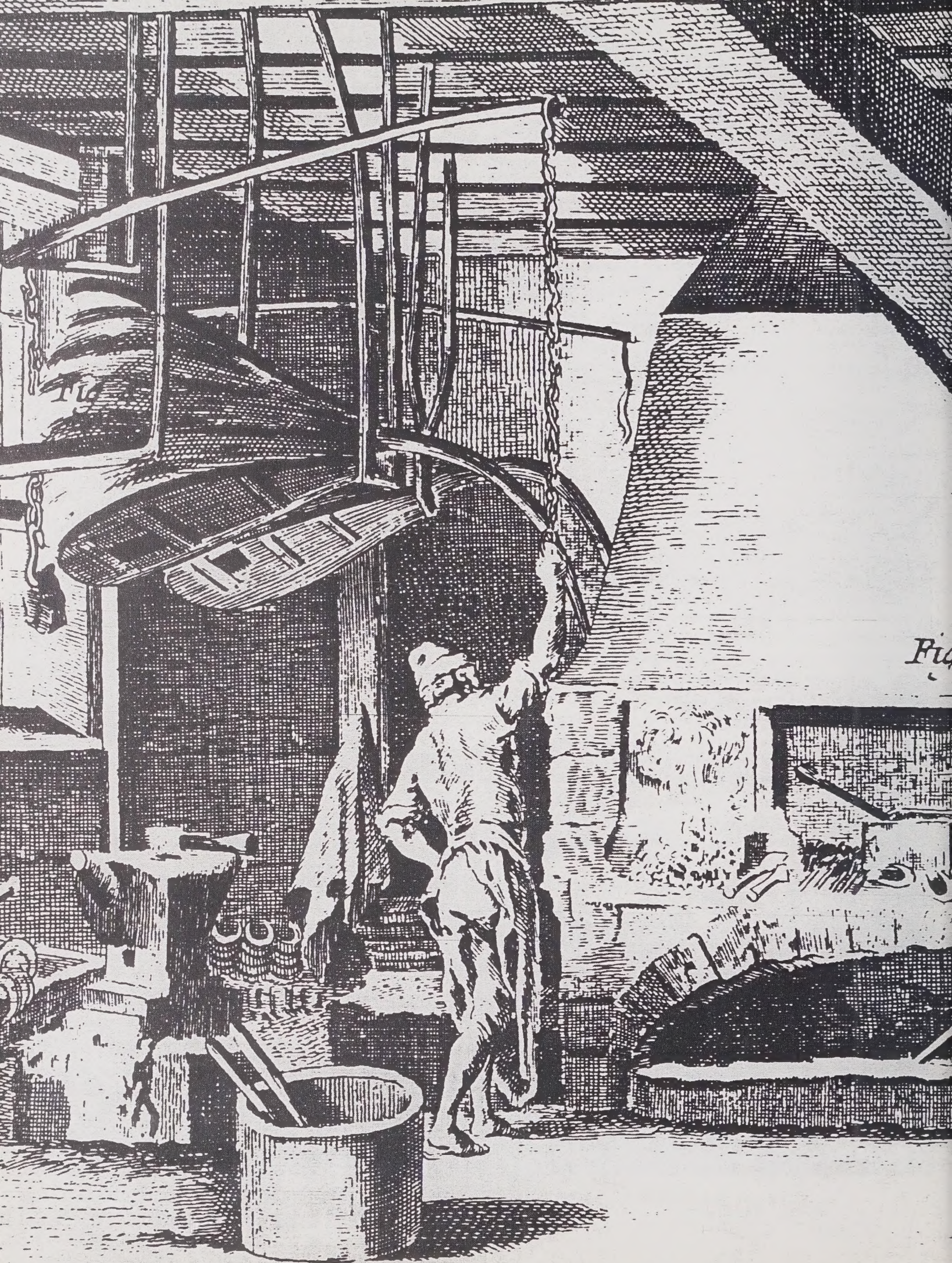


Fig. 6.

The consensus today is that certain methods for bluing steel had not been invented until the 19th century. It has been assumed that any coloring on steel parts was restricted to fire blues or chemical browns until the 19th century. This opinion has held in spite of physical evidence from before that time showing traces of chemical blues and blacks.

References to steel coloring must be researched by examining armorers' publications. In the 18th century and before, the armorer was the primary source for metal finishes and other trades that used such finsihes borrowed the techniques from these arms makers. Before 1800 the wealthy class was the primary patron of the armorer for armor, swords, and firearms, consequently, the richer the embellishment, the more successful was the artisan. Suits of armor were often colored black, swords were a brilliant blue, and firearms displayed both colors in their decorations. The armorer was constantly striving for better finishes and new processes. For this reason, they became the inventors and perfectors of most of the methods employed.

My original intent was to experiment with charcoal bluing. This was a coloring process known to be in use at least as early as the 18th century. It involved heating steel and charcoal together in a controlled atmosphere. The steel I used for the coloring was 2035 hot rolled steel. I picked this low carbon steel because its availability and common usage allowed me virtually unlimited access to stock which would help to insure consistent results. I used plates 1½ x 3 x ⅛" polished by hand to 600 grit. I tried several different polishes on the steel plates, from 400 grit finish to a mirror polish. I found that the 400 grit finish was rather dull and did not show the true colors. At the other end of the scale, the mirror finish from a buffing wheel involved more time in getting the piece ready than any benefit I derived from it. I settled on a 600 grit hand finish that was not as difficult to obtain, yet still showed the colors as well as the high polish. I used this finish on the experimental plates, though in later work on actual pieces, I opted for the mirror finish.

Along with the plates I colored with charcoal, I also used what I refer to as control pieces and these plates were what prompted me to change the course of my experiments. These pieces were identical to the plates I was coloring with charcoal, but they were left exposed to the air to take on temper colors. *Fire blue* is one of the names for the coloring they exhibited. It is also called *temper blue* and *draw blue*. This is a very transitory color that in the 18th century was considered a store finish, one that would attract a customer, but would not wear well. Fire blue is a superficial oxidation of the surface by heating in the presence of oxygen and is the oldest method of coloring. It can be used as a flash color to quickly decorate a piece. A slightly more durable finish can be built up by letting the piece soak in heat for an extended period of time. The color variations of temper colors are well documented, so they made a good comparison for my experiments. The objective was to compare the color difference between the plate embedded in charcoal in a controlled, oxygen-poor atmosphere and the plate exposed to free oxygen at the same temperature and exposure time. I wanted to make sure that the color I was getting in the box was caused by the charcoal and not just the effect of the heat.

During the process of experimenting with charcoal bluing, several times, upon opening the furnace I found that I had accidentally allowed charcoal dust to settle on the control piece. This meant that the experiment had to be repeated, but more importantly, I noticed a difference in color where the charcoal dust had been.

In my research, I had found a reference to the coloring of sword blades in a recent translation of a 1771 German book on the trades, *Handewerke und Kunste in Tabellen*. It was an obscure reference, but it stuck with me. The line that attracted my attention was "rubbed with sweet oil and sprinkled with ash."[4] This appeared to have some relationship to what I was doing and it warranted a closer look.

From my experience I had concluded that the ash mentioned was actually charcoal dust, and that the sweet oil was probably a light machine oil. My assumption regarding the ash was proven correct, but not being familiar with the oils available to the 18th century artisan the type of oil eluded me. In conversation with John Bivins of Wilmington, North Carolina, one of the translators of the above mentioned book, I learned that sweet oil was a term used for edible oils and he suggested either olive or walnut oil.

I ran a number of experiments with various plant oils, but with their heavy viscosity I was unable to bring out the brilliant colors I felt I should be seeing. Two other types of oils remained to be tried and I knew it would have to be a very thin oil. One was whale oil, which would have been readily available at the time, and the other was any of a number of modern, petroleum based oils which would probably have been unknow at the time. Today, of course, the situation is reversed, whale oil is no longer available, but we have a wide selection of synthetic and petroleum oils, so I selected a light machine oil that proved to work very well.

In my experiments with the coloring, I found that the 400-500° F temperature span produced the optimum color range, lower temperatures produced little color and at higher ranges colors quickly lost their brilliance. I used three plates in each run: a control piece polished and left clean to receive a temper color for comparison, a second plate dusted with charcoal without oil and the third piece oiled and dusted.

At 400° F the control piece was a red/yellow, the dry dusted plate was a darker yellow with a dark red overlay, and the oiled plate was a brilliant red/purple. Both of the latter were a deeper, more brilliant color than the control piece.

At 500° F the control piece was a brilliant blue/purple, the dusted piece showed a yellow tint, but was otherwise nearly devoid of color. The oiled plate was the most striking, it was a more brilliant blue than the control piece and with additional deep red overlay.

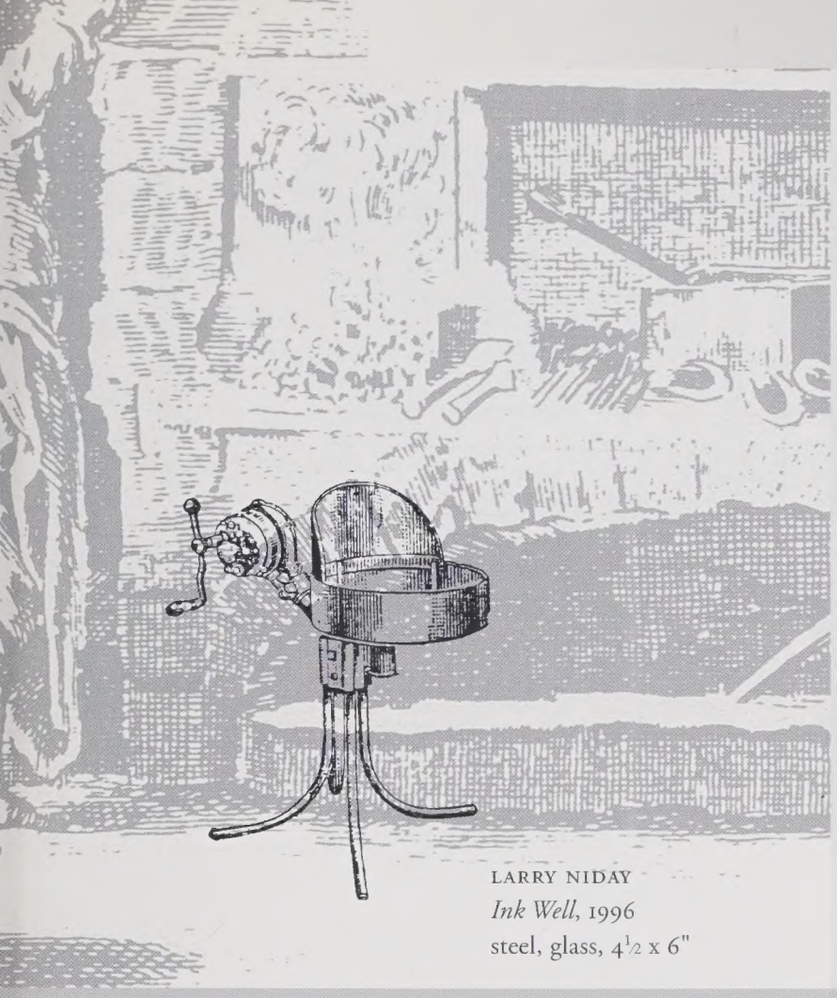
In later experiments I ran the plates through smaller temperature increments between the 400 and 500° F temperature ranges and achieved many color combinations in yellows, blues, and reds. It was simply a matter of stopping at the color I liked. When the piece was finished, it needed to be preserved and protected from oxidation. I found that oiling or waxing it dramatically darkened the color, so this had to be taken into consideration when coloring. I have purposely avoided relating exact temperatures for the colors I received because the length of time at a particular temperature was a factor. I also found that various steels reacted in different ways through the temperature ranges.

The process was relatively simple. A thin coating of charcoal dust was held against the surface by a film of oil and heated to develop an envelope of gas. The piece was worked to a high polish and placed on a sheet of metal so it could be handled without disturbing the coat of charcoal that was applied. I then gave it a fine spray coat of oil. I used WD40, but any thin oil seemed to work, it deposited carbon on the surface as it evaporated, which enhanced the chemical reaction the charcoal created. Next, I covered the surface with charcoal dust. I tried different granulations and found that the finest dust gave the best results by far. The grainier it was, the more uneven and mottled the color seemed to be. I ground the charcoal with a mortar and pestle and filled the foot of a panty hose leg. Wearing rubber gloves, I kneaded the ball of charcoal dust in my hand while passing it back and forth over the piece, completely coating the surface.

For smaller pieces, I used a heat-treating furnace set at the desired temperature. Before I placed the piece in the chamber, I touched it with my finger in a spot that would show when I opened the furnace. This spot did not seem to make a difference in the final finish if I kept it as small as possible. I turned on the furnace and let it reach the set temperature, then I put the piece in and let it stabilize for about fifteen minutes before I checked it. When I opened the door to check the progress, I could see the color in the bare spot. If it was not the color I desired I turned the temperature up 25° degrees at a time and checked frequently until I got a color I liked. This could be repeated past 500° at which point the pieces lost color. If I went past the color I had in mind, there was no option but to repolish the piece and start again.

For larger pieces, I used the kitchen oven. Though accuracy in temperature control was lacking, if patience was used, the temperature raised slowly and the piece checked often, very nice results could be obtained.

The colors are obtained through a chemical reaction involving the carbon content of the charcoal and the oil in the presence of oxygen with heat as the activator. Carbon is introduced into the steel by a gas-metal reaction.[5] The heat generates carbon monoxide (CO) and carbon dioxide (CO_2) mixed with free oxygen fanning an envelope of gas around the steel.[6] The carbon compounds break down, diffusing into the porous surface adding carbon to the steels. The color and depth that result are in direct relation to the carbon and oxygen concentration, the temperature, the exposure time, and the chemical composition of the steel.[7]



LARRY NIDAY
Ink Well, 1996
steel, glass, 4½ x 6"

The charcoal dusting finish is a durable finish, more so than temper colors, but perhaps not quite as durable as a rust blue or caustic blue. I had expected it to be a very delicate finish until I started repolishing pieces I wanted to re-color. I found that it was difficult to remove when using a polishing compound such as 500 grit or white diamond. It is a finish that, with care, should last for many years.

With these experiments, which were repeated many times to reach some consistency in the results, I tried to bring some light on the coloring process which, I believe, has been lost since the 18th century. What I have found is by no means the last word on this process; each time I color a piece, I learn something new about it. This is a technique that I think must have been so commonly used in the past that our predecessors felt no need to record it. There are many such processes that have disappeared. However, if we remain diligent and willing to research the past, I am confident that such lost processes can be brought back to light.

Larry Niday is a metalsmith who lives and works in Knoxville, Iowa.

NOTES

[1] Maria Nicolai and John Bivins, Translators, *Handwerke und Kunste in Tabellen*. P. N. Sprengel, 1761, p. 21.
[2] ibid, p. 19.
[3] James Anderson, "Charcoal Bluing of Rifle Barrels," *Journal of Historical Armsmaking Technology, Vol. V*. Friendship, IN: National Muzzleloading Rifle Assocation, 1993, p. 56.
[4] Nicolai, p. 54.
[5] George Krauss, *Steels: Heat Treatment and Processing Principles*. Metals Park, Ohio: American Society for Metals, 1989, p. 286.
[6] Joseph R. Davis, ed., *ASM Handbook*. Metals Park, Ohio: American Society for Metals, 1991, p. 331.
[7] Lyman, Taylor, p. 116.

Reviews

Ries Niemi

Artworks Gallery
Seattle, WA
December 7 – 31, 1995

By Matthew Kangas

The Spokane-born artist Ries Niemi's return to the Pacific Northwest after a decade-long hiatus in southern California is a cause for celebration. This time around, however, Ries Niemi is not making sculpture out of color Xerox and mixed media but unabashedly functional chairs.

Cut and welded steel is the material for each hand cut and assembled chair. Some are editioned in up to 12 copies. The new resident of Bow, Washington showed four separate bodies of work: portrait chairs; modern art masterpiece stools; crown stools; and metal versions of antique wooden chair designs by prominent mass-production, turn-of-the-century furniture companies.

The portrait chairs hark back to the artist's Neo-Pop Art days in Seattle when he exhibited at a small cutting-edge gallery called Rosco Louie. The back of each chair is the celebrity's head. The left and right arms may contain, respectively, birth and death years. The seat is punched out with the figure's name and perhaps an appropriate quotation. For example, in an un-editioned, one-of-a-kind work, jazz musician Miles Davis's head looms up, shoulder-length hair and all, above cut-out letters spelling "MILES".

Another musician, late leader of the Grateful Dead rock group, Jerry Garcia, has long hair, too, but his first and last names cascade vertically on either side of his head. On the seat is the old pot smoker's byline: "We can share what we got of yours/Cause we done shared all of mine."

Despite the meticulous workmanship and uniformly black metal surface treatment, there's a certain slick, commercial look to these chairs.

However, *Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy Onassis* has a more simplified line drawing of the face with two larger see through eyes and in general seems more successfully conceived and executed. Her string of pearls before a windowpane backdrop at least create more spatial interest. The portrait chairs are also a clever update on Victorian cut paper silhouette portraits.

Niemi has always been good at ridiculing fine arts culture whether through the deliberately tacky and cheap color Xerox medium or, in this case, the use of recognizable famous paintings in his *Modern Art Masterpiece Stools*, 1995. Edvard Munch's *The Scream* forms the white cut-out back for a tall-legged bar stool. Too fragile for commercial use, this would look great in the den or bedroom of a prominent art collector.

Van Gogh's portrait, in blue, is even less original, but the surrounding oval lends the work an appropriate cameo-like quality.

One lady's head from *Les Demoiselles d'Avignon* by Pablo Picasso is the most striking, perhaps because the simplified, reductive drawing best lends itself to the metal drawing. Framed in metal like a real painting, the bright yellow image does rise above the ubiquitous Picasso T-shirt convention. Maybe Niemi is reminding us how degraded these famous images are already. With typical glee, he's all for kicking an art movement when it's down. Does appropriation art now justify any cannibalization of cultural icons?

The crown stools are somewhere in between Pop Art and real kitsch. Ornate, decorative, and technically, the most complicated of the series, each chair-back is based on a different kind of crown (coronet, bishop's crown, Plantagenet, etceteras). As with the portrait chairs and *Modern Art Masterpiece Stools*, the legs are linear and spindly, hardly able to support even a child.

The series based on early 20th-century historical reproduction and proto-modern designers is the plainest by far, yet seem closest to Scott Burton and has a certain Conceptual Art tang. Favoring a uniform black-gray surface treatment, they both honor and quote the originals without ridiculing them (Stickley-Brandt, Leavens and Son, Roycroft, etceteras). Niemi's versions are funny in a dead-pan way, as the original utopian impulse is rendered flatly and schematically.

With sturdier seats, legs, ladder backs, and foot railings, these chairs suggest Niemi's strengths were design-oriented all along rather than sculptural. His wall sculptures of the 1980s were always too two-dimensional anyway. Now, when he allows the dull mail-order catalog illustration to dictate the image and shape, the three dimensions of the simple chair come to the fore effortlessly.

Though made by hand, these chairs belong in the Museum of Modern Art design department. (You know, the museum where only the machine-made functional object is allowed.) Ries Niemi turns out to be such a consummate and clever craftsman – and artist – that he can fashion something so that is looks machine-made yet not mass-produced. Now all he has to do is drop the cute commercial items like the stools and portrait chairs and focus on the updated second-hand furniture store objects. How about Great Furniture of the Twentieth Century – all in black steel?

Matthew Kangas, art critic and independent curator, organized "Breaking Barriers: Recent American Craft" for the American Craft Museum, opening this summer.

ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT
Stickley/Brandt Chair, Roycroft Chair, Leavens & Son Chair, 1995
hand bent, plasma cut steel, powder coated
46 x 19 x 19" each

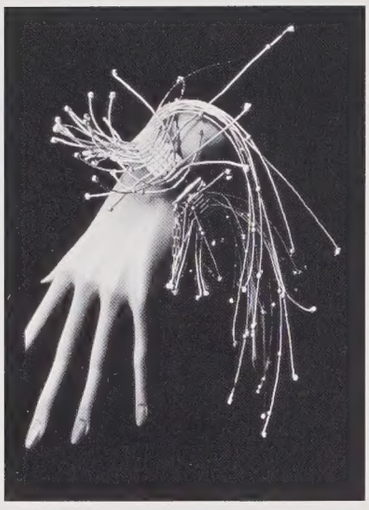
OPPOSITE PAGE
Jacqueline Onassis Chair, (Edition of 12), 1995
hand bent, plasma cut steel, powder coated
46 x 28 x 22"

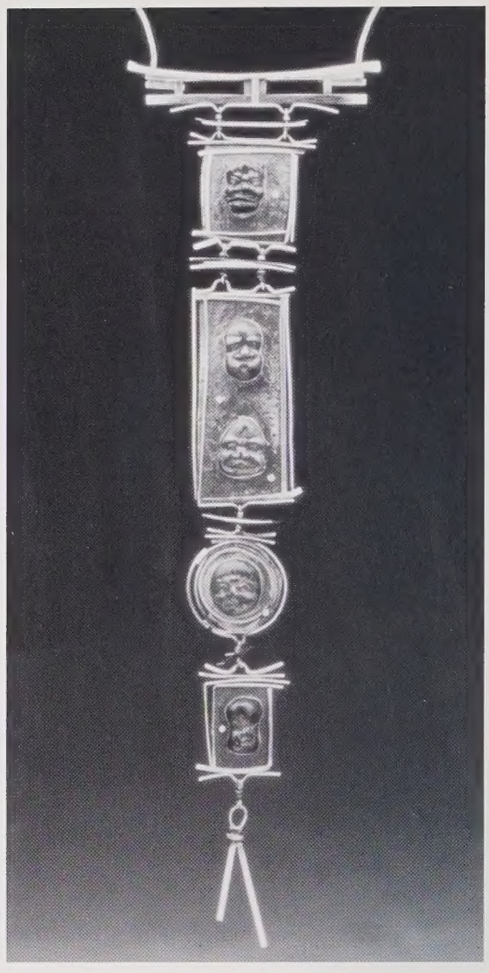
Photographs By Tom Collicott

LEFT TO RIGHT

Waterfall bracelet
sterling silver, 14k beads

Netsuki necklace
14k, 18k diamonds, Japanese mask





Mary Ann Scherr: Sculptural Jewelry

Mobilia Gallery
Cambridge, Massachusetts
November 5 – December 3, 1996

by Patricia Harris and David Lyon

Mary Ann Scherr is something of a legend for her technical innovations – her pioneering work in stainless steel and aluminum, her dramatic body monitor pieces that serve a medical purpose while adorning the body – so any exhibition of current work offers an opportunity to glimpse what she's up to now. After a hiatus from exhibitions, she has been featured at several East Coast venues in the last year.

This exhibition at Mobilia favors what Scherr calls her "big statements." The selections recap the hallmarks of Scherr the designer while also asserting her prerogative as the artist. *New* is a relative term in Scherr's work, since she continues to mine design motifs, finding new twists of expression or recapitulating older designs in fresh fabrications. Yet the newest direction in her work proves something of a surprise.

Scherr continues to demonstrate a sure sense of the engineering and architecture of the human body. While these works have a cool elegance in a case or on the wall, they come to life on the body – an advantage of a retail gallery show where viewers can interact with the jewelry. A simple yoke of stainless steel, as spare as a minimalized antelope head, springs to life as an echo of collar bones and shoulder blades. Mobilia devoted an entire case to Scherr's *Waterfall* jewelry of liquid silver and round gold beads strung in flexible spray-like arrangements that become kinetic sculpture on the body.

This particular exhibition underplayed Scherr's current technical preoccupation with an etching technique she calls "Instant Etch." Based on transfer of carbon images from photocopies or laser prints, the technique permits Scherr to "reproduce almost any image on almost any metal." In these small pieces we see the artist at play – creating both simple patterns that recall block printing as well as complex designs that are Damascene in their complexity. While the choices for this exhibition highlighted the technical possibilities of Instant Etch, we look forward to seeing work that marries this rich surface design to Scherr's elegant architecture.

Although we associate Scherr's design aesthetic with a streamline, modernist style, she has asserted her artist's prerogative to create a new body of work that confounds all expectations. Scherr subordinates her own designs to build neck pieces that highlight netsuke and other Japanese folk carvings. Scherr explains this sudden leap to the contemplative self-effacement of the netsuke series as having collected "a number of important artifacts that I want to incorporate into jewelry so that they become heirlooms."

In one of the most successful pieces of this series, she builds still frames of metal for panels of stone into which she sets carved masks and precious stones. It is a radical departure from the vast body of her work in which each piece seems to be a unified gesture. Here it is necessary to read the pendant panels serially – not as a single rush of machine-age vectors but as the contemplation of artifact, a nod to the maker's hand.

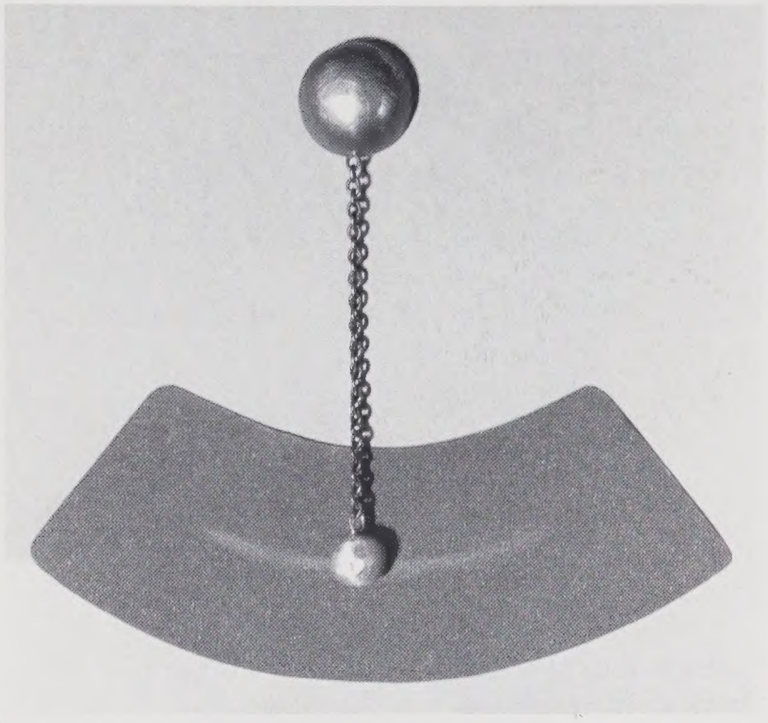
Patricia Harris and David Lyon are writers who reside in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

CLOCKWISE,
FROM UPPER RIGHT

Oval Cut Gemless Earrings
sterling silver

5 Karat Gemless Stud Earrings
14k

Gemless Drop Earrings
sterling silver



Abrasive Brooch Series:
Homage to the Mentor/The Process of Mentorship
sterling silver, 24k, sandpaper
2¼ X 3"

Photographs by Rob Sansone

Moving Boundaries: Nicole Landaw

Wearley Studio Gallery
Royal Oak, MI
October 5 – December 20, 1996

by Jennifer Coppel

Over seventy-five pieces of visually and conceptually compelling jewelry are represented in Nicole Landaw's exhibition, "Moving Boundaries." This body of work was created while Ms. Landaw was a student, in 1995, at Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan and in 1996, at Fachhochschule fur Gestaltung in Pforzheim, Germany. The majority of the work hangs on the walls, though a few pieces are elegantly suspended from the center of the ceiling inviting handling and close scrutiny by the viewer. A wide range of materials are explored, from gold and sterling silver to sand paper and cement.

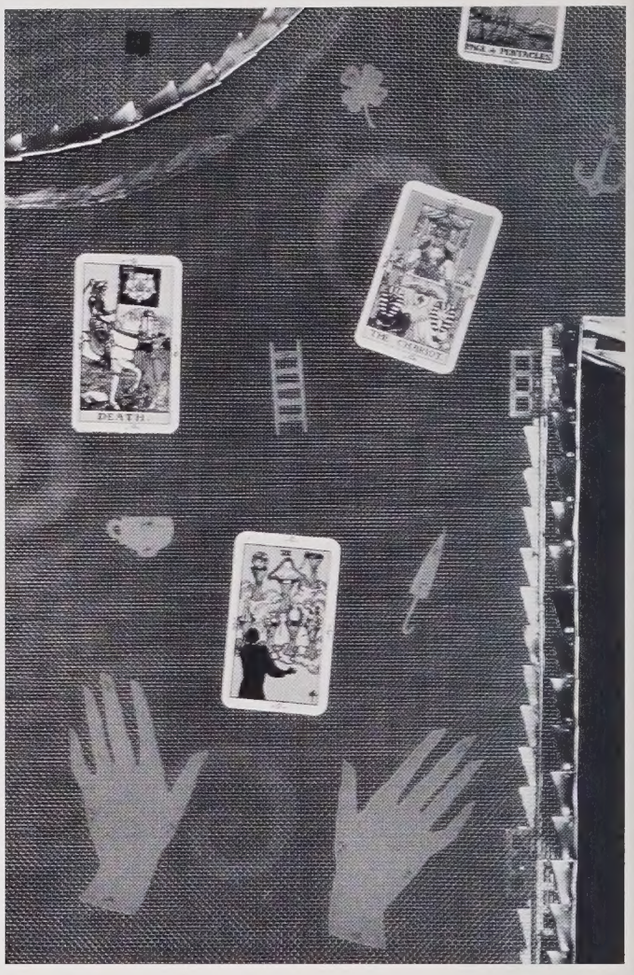
Each series of work utilizes different visual, formal, material, and social approaches, but they all attempt to bridge the gap between maker and wearer. Frequently, jewelry only relates to the owner by being comfortably wearable. Nicole further binds this relationship by using the jewelers' tools to expose the maker's process and to leave her mark as a maker. In her *Double Brooch Abrasive* sets she uses burrs and sand paper to achieve this important connection. She also attempts to personalize and customize the jewelry to the wearer, especially in a series of cast soap rings. These rings maximize her focus on the wearer, since the patron actually forms the ring, using the artist's contributions as mere tools and resources. Furthermore, the wearer plays a pivotal role in allowing the social implications of each series to surface. All of the pieces have a different level of wearability and need to be worn to be activated. For example, her critique of the messiness and myth behind wearing make up becomes most obvious when her *Cosmetic Brooches* soil a blouse and insidiously mark everyone around the wearer.

Historically, jewelry has been passed down through generations, subsequently gaining value the longer it survives. However, jewelry changes as it is repeatedly worn, an acute observation and point of interest for Nicole. Several series expedite this erosion process and therefore control the half-life of the jewelry. Sometimes this deterioration eventually reveals something new about the piece, such as the hidden precious material in her *Necklace/Brooch* sets. At other times, the precious material is aggressively worn down, as in the case of the file ring designed to be worn with a gold band.

These series not only create an interesting twist on jewelry's historical function, but they also comment on the social function of precious materials, such as gold and gems, in society. Jewelry's power to express social rank is obviously a significant subject of inquiry, particularly in her *Gemless...* series. At first glance these pieces look like they are comprised of gems; but in actuality, they are recessed, faceted sheets of metal. Upon this realization, the originally perceived financial value of these pieces drops, revealing the fiction behind defining social rank through jewelry.

Although each series contains cynical social commentary, the pieces remain intimate, personable, accessible, and relevant. Each piece is beautifully crafted and gratifies the viewer through simple, elegant forms. Most of Landaw's jewelry is clearly indebted to the work of a number of contemporary artists, and the similarity of her work to theirs seems deliberate. Further, the artist has applied her own forms and imagery to these previously investigated themes and therefore personalizes the ideas, successfully contributing something fresh to the critical discussion of such subjects.

Jennifer Coppel is a metalsmith studying at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. She recently completed an internship at the American Craft Museum.



Ephemeral Metal: Interlock-Interweave
Debra Chase, Anne Elliot, Tamiko Kawata Ferguson

Elsa Mott Ives Gallery
New York, New York
February 28 – April 4, 1996

by William Baran-Mickle

One moment it's here, the next it may be gone. Such is the sentiment of the title of this exhibition. The artists included in this exhibition share this flirtation with time through their chosen materials. Debra Chase and Anne Elliot use industrial wire mesh as their principal material, while Tamiko Kawata Ferguson uses safety pins to create the bodies of her works. With each artists' work there seems always the danger of distortion. A haphazard occurrence might immediately dent an Elliot or Chase work. Moving a Ferguson work would completely alter its form. Each craftsperson has had to search out solutions to the structural problems inherent in the materials.

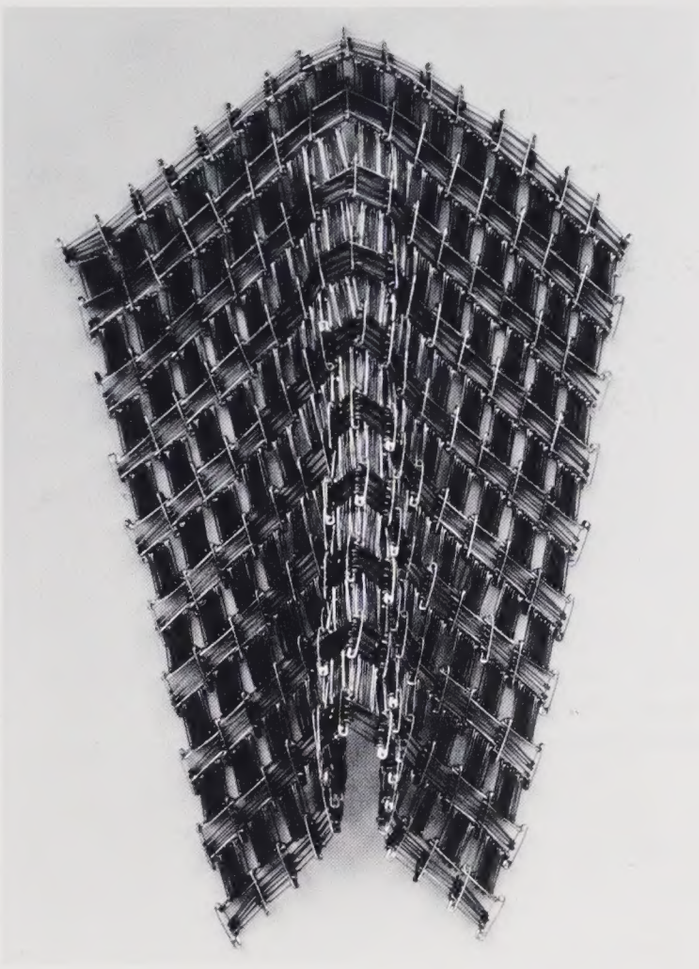
Elliot crimps and layers the mesh of her large airy panels (up to 4 by 5') often including wire shapes and graphic images. Her smaller format panels are more traditional mesh and paper collages mounted on board and framed under glass. The bodies of Chase's sculptures are made rigid by the use of spacer bars and triangular copper shapes that she laboriously sews to the edges. Both artists use multiple layers of mesh that add strength as well as allowing for a greater visual and conceptual depth. Ferguson has learned well the language of pins and uses this knowledge to create both stiff and flexible woven works.

Chase's and Ferguson's investigations are formal, but Chase's formality tends to flatten her personally intense messages. Elliott takes the most risks in pushing the limits of her material which can, however, backfire and result in an overall murky statement.

With a decidedly Chinese influence Elliot manages to convincingly capture the feeling of the asian style. *Know Your Fish Bridge* is a collage of shapes resembling a topographical image of a stream with swimming fish. The effect, as with most of her images, is one of shadows, profiles, and subtle flatness. Her largest panel, *Dispelling Clouds*, has the most sculptural quality, with attached reliefs of shaped, crimped mesh. Such concerns would be an interesting avenue for her to pursue.

Ferguson's works are the most abstract of the show. Most are geometric in shape and veer between being visually heavy and appearing airy. *Being,* a dense 1½' sphere, is constructed of black 1½" pins. Unlike a ball of string or a collection of tin foil, *Being* retains an unusual depth when studied, yet at a glance it is visually heavy. The depth of the viewer's participation makes the difference. *Vertical Wave*, displayed adjacent to *Being*, is constructed with a very open, hexagonal weave of 2" black pins. Flat and stretching upward about 10' and hung from only a few points it is a graceful, flowing form with an outward bulge.

Ferguson weaves with gold, nickel, and black pins. Variations are created by both the length of the pins and the way they stack and interlock. The artist achieves the effects alluded to in her titles, such as *City Windows*. The systematic use of different colors and pin sizes makes one very aware of the surprising range of pattern and form possible when using this unusual material.



Chase often uses the garment form to house her comments about cultural attitudes and personal experiences. At times, these sculptural forms can seem too stiff. However, in works such as *Red Rose Hat*, Chase utilizes the mesh's surface tension to create complex and elegant sculptural forms à la Naum Gabo. All the garments have that *on exhibit look*, like anthropological displays of royal costumes. A reserved use of decorative elements, from beads and sequins to forged wire shapes lightly scattered over the mesh fields, which themselves may be colored, contribute to the reticent sense of these works.

In *Fortune's Gate*, a decorated jacket floats before a large painted board overlaid with words and rimmed with colored paper squares. Spelling out questions about paths and choices, the words correspond to the jacket's details of forged wire, acrylic symbols, and tarot cards. This work holds a balance between personal intrigue and an overriding sense of universal mystery. Chase's work is intimate and serene.

It is probably not a coincidence that all three artists work outside their original cultural practices (interweave?). All use materials that not only allow a deeper, penetrating look at the work, but require it in order to get the most of their statements. It is refreshing to see work that concentrates on some of metals transparent possibilities.

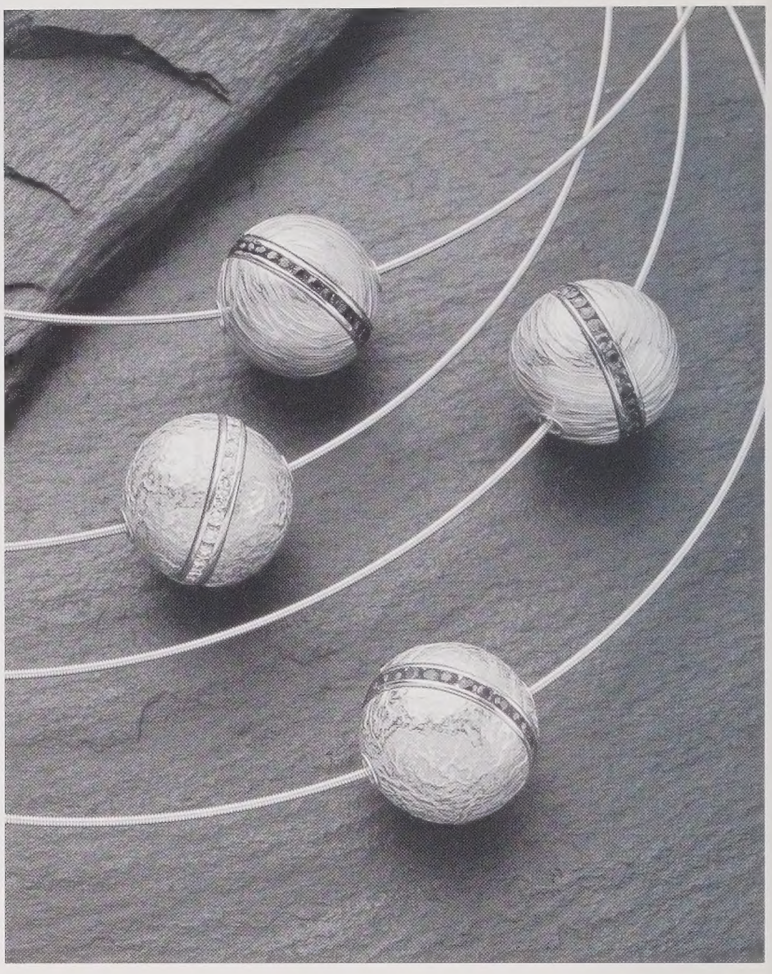
William Baran-Mickle is a metalsmith who resides in Rochester, NY.

LEFT TO RIGHT

Debra Chase
Fortunes Gate (Cassandra's Robe), detail
aluminum (screen), brass, acrylic,
pastel on paper, wood, tarot cards, wire
7½ x 5½ x 2¾'

Anne Elliot
Dispelling Clouds
aluminum (screen), paint, wire
48 x 52 x 4"

Tamiko Kawata Ferguson
City Windows
pins
10 x 17 x 2½"



Ball Pendants, 1995
18k, emerald, diamond, sapphire

Barbara Heinrich
Contemporary Classics New Jewelry

Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, California
August 5 – 31, 1996

by Charlene M. Modena

When looking at contemporary gold jewelry the undeniable dazzle and splendor of gold and gemstones create a glistening veil, behind which is often found only previously explored and overworked issues.

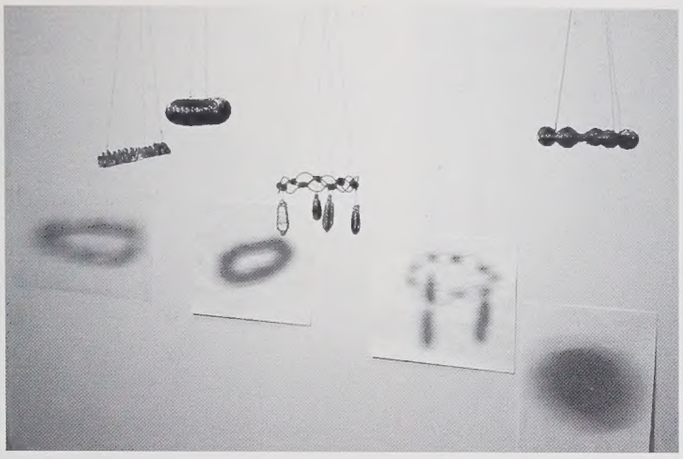
Fortunately, when I saw Barbara Heinrich's work at Susan Cummins Gallery any preconceptions I brought with me were dispelled. Heinrich's new pieces continue to work within the tradition of the inherent qualities of material beauty which gold and gemstones possess. But at the same time, her work captivates by recalling, but not copying, design sources ranging from the historical, in the *Wheat Grain* series, to the ethnic in the *Shield* series, and then onto celestial mysteries with both the *Orbit* and *Milky Way* pieces. In addition to the objects initial appeal, Heinrich's work continues to intrigue viewers as it maps a path of inquiry that includes an amalgam of stylistic breadth, references to her medium, and a self-imposed, personal approach to design problems.

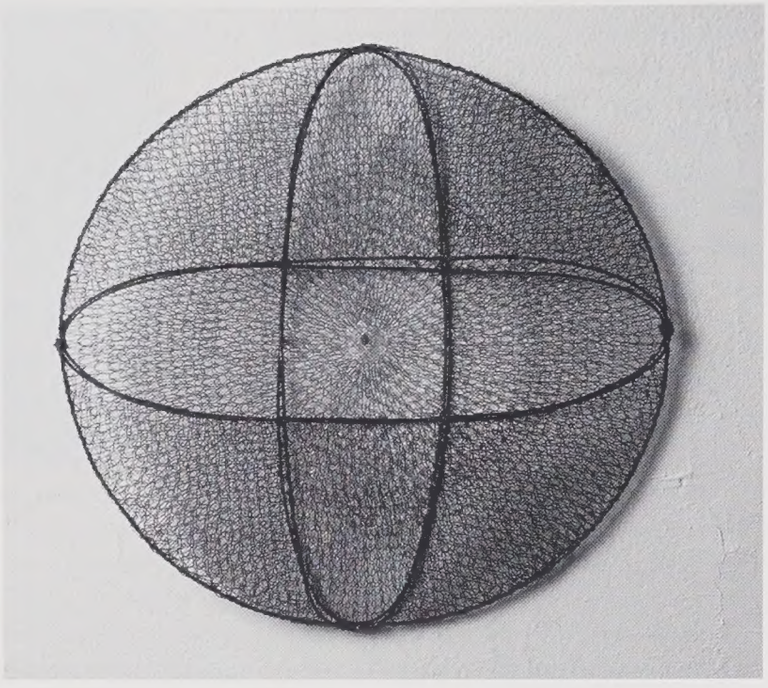
A commitment to wearability, and an appreciation for the harmony of rhythm shows itself in all the work on display: the *Wave Ball* groupings, the *Sinuated Trumpet* series, and a classical necklace of alternating tubular gold beads and natural aquamarine crystals. Often the fluid counterpoint of an intricate catch is played against the dominant elements of progressive and repetitive rhythm; such as the surprise of a delicate shell catch against a string of pearls, or a diamond set catch nestled almost hidden among a row of wheat grains.

The *Wheat Grain* series exhibits the apex of all these qualities; delicately hinged, deftly detailed, perfectly weighted, and articulated to the body. The series is elegant, graceful, and completely rejects the overwhelming qualities often found in contemporary gold jewelry.

A product of both German and American training, it is no surprise that Barbara Heinrich's work is at one time masterful, subtle, and unpredictable It well succeeds in her goal of "putting a grain of timelessness and eternal beauty into each piece."

Charlene M. Modena is a writer who lives in Muir Beach, California.





Shari Mendelson: Sculpture, Installation and Drawings

Black & Herron Space
New York, New York
March 16 – April 6, 1996

by Marjorie Simon

LEFT TO RIGHT

Crowns with Shadow Drawings, 1993-95
steel, brass, wax, lead, paper
variable dimensions

Untitled, 1995
steel, silver, stone, 14 x 14 x 1"

"I didn't unexpectantly run into Stephen that often when he was alive, yet after he died I saw him all the time." Thus does Shari Mendelson reflect on mortality, temporality, and the ephemerality of a life cut improbably short. Her recent series of *Crowns,* shown at Black and Herron Space last April, reveals her continued contemplation of memory through the device of structures and their shadows.

The installation consisted of several components: the life-sized, human-scaled crowns suspended from the ceiling just out of reach, and their shadows, cast on sheets of paper strategically placed at eye level on the walls. As transient as the ghost of memory, the shadows seemed as real as the objects. They might negate the original steel, wax, brass, or lead of the crowns, so that the substantial becomes insubstantial, or vice versa. A gossamer woven wire crown appears substantial in shadow; a leaden wreath casts an ambiguous, fleeting memory. Like the fragment of a dream that recedes upon awakening, the objects themselves remain just out of reach. Swaying on the tiniest currents of air created by the movement of visitors through the gallery, the moving shadows are reminiscent of Ellen Driscoll's use of object and shadow in her giant camera obscura a few years ago. And like Driscoll's installation, the crowns confidently claim their space, from celestial origins in the gallery's ceiling to just above the viewer's head.

Fiber techniques also inform the wall pieces of obsessively spun, woven, and knitted iron binding wire supported by sterling silver scaffolding and threaded with crystal beads. Like Lee Bontecou's much larger metal and canvas structures of the early 1960s, Mendelson's concentric circles spiral out from the wall into a three-dimensional galaxy. At about one foot square, these pieces lack the monumentality to match their obsessive technique, yet their very intimacy suggests a microscopic world gone literally haywire. They are a universe simultaneously expanding and collapsing on itself. This concept reaches its apotheosis in the somewhat less successful wax paper drawings, which seem to suck energy in without giving as much back.

But such somber reflections are leavened by the inclusion of *Sins,* part of an original collection of 64 quite solid embossed medallions chronicling sins culled from Jewish prayerbooks. In addition to the seven deadlies in common usage, Mendelson has demonstrated the universality of human nature by including such gems as *Empty Confessions* and *Frivolity at Dreadful Times.*

Mendelson has pushed the metal envelope in this body of work. As Beverly Penn once observed, [*Metalsmith*, Spring 1993, vol. 13, no.2, p. 24] Mendelson has used pairs or multiples to suggest dialogue between ideas, often by means of the mirror image to denote communication. Whereas *Calendar*, 1990-92 recorded the passage of time through repetition (with variation) of leaf forms in various patinas, here the crowns communicate with their own memories through their shadows. Even the wax paper drawings tease substance out of wire and remind us that a structure can be spun from a thread, volume from a single line, persistent memory from a single encounter or a lifetime of interaction.

Marjorie Simon is a metalsmith and writer who lives in Highland Park, New Jersey.

RIGHT TO LEFT

Canada Goose and Man, man's ring
cast gold

Pearl Pin
pearl, silver, 1¼" long

Lois Etherington Betteridge

Harbinger Gallery
Waterloo, Ontario, Canada
October 18 – November 3, 1996

by Anne McPherson

This is the 22nd solo exhibition for Lois Etherington Betteridge, whose noted career of making and mentoring extends over more than 40 years. Consequently this latest show did not set out to prove anything about either the *how* or the *why* of metalsmithing. The thrust of the new work here is in the direction of simplicity and low-key effects: Betteridge is past master of the precious.

On display at Harbinger was a fresh outpouring of bowls and vases, which invited contemplation of the random yet selected qualities of metal. An 8" diameter footless brass bowl whose sides are formed of casually overlapping cut-out silhouettes, is both comfortably satisfying and esthetically intriguing. You want to take it in both hands – it has that domestic attraction – and at the same time you want to stand back and admire the gleaming iridescence of the pattern caused by heat, with its suggestion of torrid, wispy flowers whose colours are so intense they might glow in the dark.

A meandering line of bud vases paraded across a gallery plinth like pillars in an open forum. These copper objects have been wrapped for a time in cloths impregnated with chemicals, and left to acquire an indeterminate pattern and rich array of tones. Of varying heights, their plinths turned awry, footed, or angled, the vases, with their irregular openings and subtle colourings, look like columns of an architecture imagined but not built by a Piranesi of the metal world.

The brooches in gold and silver, part of the *Cyclone* series, are just that – a swirling froth of wire and fine ribbon, seemingly fleet and fleeting. Odd it is, that things so slight and delicate should have such an arresting effect. As for the gold rings: here is where pure form and whimsy meet and unite. Betteridge turns angles obliquely, playing with round and square, even in one case with the inside of the ring, giving it an inner fold to balance the right angle opposite it on the outside. One – my favourite – shows two open claws, slit down the sides, joined briefly near the bottom on both sides, and then separated again at the base.

Refreshingly unpolemical, this exhibition does not require you to stop looking at what delights you, to stand back from it and ask, "what does it mean?" Instead one has the pleasure of watching a metals magician playing with the question, "what if...?"

Anne McPherson is a writer and curator in the visual arts and the editor of Ontario Craft.

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Dear Editor:

I am sure that you are receiving a large volume of mail regarding the most recent *Exhibition in Print*, and I felt I should add my voice because I have concerns regarding several aspects of the publication. It is my feeling that *Metalsmith* is primarily for (and appreciated by) metalsmiths, and people who are very interested in the field, probably interested enough to *follow* the work of many of its practitioners. I am both a practitioner and a person who attempts to keep informed of interesting (and horrifying) things going on in the field of metalsmithing. It is largely because of *Metalsmith* that many of us are able to keep informed. Of course there was much outstanding new work, as expected, in the *Exhibition in Print*; and some new names, which is always exciting. The magazine is beautiful overall, as it has been for many years, and some of the images are exceptional in many ways. I rely on *Metalsmith* to provide me with a periodic infusion of excitement and inspiration, and I have to say that I was disappointed with the overall quality of this year's *Exhibition in Print*.

I am not specifically aware of the objectives of the recent publication, but I would assume in general that one would aspire to put together a collection that reflected excellence in some way, and probably to highlight work which rises above the rest. The first paragraph of the introduction suggests that the aims were "to seek out and reproduce some of the best and most innovative examples of contemporary North American metalwork." If this was, in fact, the goal, than I would caution you against choosing a jury which is largely unfamiliar with the work going on currently (and historically) in the field of metalsmithing. I don't think a jury of contemporary metalsmiths would include so much work which is clearly derivative of the leaders in the field. Nor can I believe that a piece completed in 1990, paired with a matching piece completed in 1995 can possibly represent these aims. With all that is going on in the world of enameling today, geometric blocks of opaque color fall short of being innovative, or exciting. I was especially surprised to see a piece which screamed Pat Flynn. Another surprise was work which would have gotten lost in a group of *New European Jewelry* from the 70s . The only unique element in that work was the statement. This is quite ironic, considering the scornful tone in the introduction regarding metalsmiths writing about their work. Even some of the work which is extraordinary doesn't seem to fit into this publication, because I have been admiring it for years in the pages of *Metalsmith*.

I am sure that a majority of the response to this *Exhibition in Print* is going to be aimed at the C.A.D. piece in the back. Allow me to state my objection in the simplest way possible. C.A.D. – C.A.M. stands for "computer assisted design, computer assisted manufacture," as we all know. The C.A.D. part is the design part (like what we all have in our sketchbooks.) The C.A.M. part is the manufacture part (like when we bend wire, and saw sheet). The image in the publication is merely the C.A.D portion of this two-step process. I would certainly consider the final product a piece of jewelry worthy of consideration, but the design is merely a design. It would be appropriate in an exhibition of designs, but not in an exhibition of metalsmithing, metalwork, or anything you would care to call the *Exhibition in Print*. Aside from that, the image is so unreadable as to not even look like an object of any kind. This leads me to another small point about the lack of visual clarity in some of the images. I know that a certain amount of this is inevitable, when reproducing slides, but I was really surprised at the degree in a few cases. I was unable to tell, in some cases, whether the work was truly dull, or had just been photographed poorly. Either way, it seems like a strange inclusion. In some cases there were perfectly good photographs of perfectly dull jewelry.

Since I have chosen not to lambaste anyone by name, I will exercise the same restraint in pointing out the elements which I found exciting. There were several examples of works that were beautifully conceived, beautifully executed, and beautifully photographed. In many cases I found the included text greatly enhanced my understanding of the piece, as in the case where I found out that those aren't just rings, but wedding bands. Also, the description of the process by which one person distributes his work is as fascinating as the work itself. This, however, would be almost irrelevant if the work itself were not exceptional. I feel as if some of the statements were simply too long (they just took up too much space). A little editing would have done wonders in this respect, and I am sure that many of those included would not have minded seeing less of their statement in exchange for larger reproductions of their work. In the case of one well known and well respected metalsmith with exceptional new work, the text positively dominates the page. In another case, an exciting newcomer sullied his work by giving a largely irrelevant history on himself. In some cases I felt the balance was good, as in work that relies heavily on text as a formal element, and has a small block of text which fills out the maker's concerns. The final irony on this point is that the person who declined to give an *artist's statement* because she felt that people could understand the *meaning* of her work simply by looking at it, gave the most pretentious statement of all.

Thank you for producing a valuable magazine, and for taking unusual risks, I think we are all better for the discussion.

Sincerely,

Jai Roberts

Dear Editor:

I would like to take this opportunity to voice a public thanks to SNAG, and specifically to Tim McCreight. Many of you out there haven't a clue as to what went on *behind your backs* over the past year concerning the EPA-California and their attempts to get their feet in your door. (Shop door, that is..) I will briefly relate the particulars.

The EPA, in its infinite wisdom, decided that all jewelers sweep – both floor and polishing – should be classified as hazardous waste. This would mean that all folks sending the offending material to the processors and refiners would be

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Letters continued from page 47

required to obtain EPA numbers, the scrap then sent by Hazardous Manifest and hauled by a licensed hazardous hauler... regardless of the size of the shop. This would end up costing you big money, and would give EPA a foothold into all jewelry and art shops for future regulation and parenting. (Super.)

This policy affected me the most. It would mean in order for me to accept any of this scrap, I would have to spend about $50,000 to become a TSD facility. I won't go into that here, but suffice to say that it forced me to close down our entire sweeps division on the spot. Well, needless to say, I had nothing to lose at this point, so I decided to get *physical*. I bombarded the EPA in Sacramento with papers, making the case that this policy was illogical, ill conceived, difficult to implement ... as well as making thousands of jewelers who did not want the intrusion, common criminals. I also pointed out that these independent-minded artisans would end up burning their own sweeps in their shops and then dumping it into a hole in the ground out back. (Sorry for this characterization of you guys ... but I had to make my point stick.) Thus, as a direct result of this policy, the EPA would be creating an even bigger environmental mess than before, as our facilities are well equipped to clean the air and to recycle the wastes, as they are sent to us at the moment.

After many mailed dissertations to the agency, personal trips up to Sacramento to do battle face to face, and after packaging many types of sample sweep as evidence of its harmlessness, I slowly noticed a change in their tune. I then requested many colleagues and groups in the industry to voice their opinion to the agency, for their consumption. Here is where I gain much respect for a certain few companies and individuals who literally stuck their necks out for defending what is right and just. Once you are branded a rabble-rouser by any regulatory organization, you can expect some sort of retribution..either in increased inspections or given a *fine-tooth-comb* designation for those inspections. They don't like rabble-rousers.... I had little to lose at this point, so I really didn't care about us.

But there were those who deserve some kudos and our gratefulness for standing up for all the rest. Joel Samitz of Garfield Refining, Tory Hoover at Hoover & Strong, Matt Runci and David Rocha at MJSA, and last but certainly not least, Tim McCreight and SNAG. All of these folks donated something to the cause, and we owe them a debt of thanks.

In the middle of this year, a notice was faxed to me from Sacramento ... quite unceremoniously ... depicting the EPA's new proposed policy. In very lawyer-like terms, they concluded that "how can one call something 'waste' (no less, hazardous waste...) if someone else would rob you of it at gun point?" Brilliant!! Gee am I glad these guys are in charge of our environment!!

Anyway the danger is past ... for the moment. The bullet has been dodged, but there's probably another on the way. Now, with all my compliments to the participants, there were a few out there that are embarrassments to their industry. I read of one who wrote about bowing to the wishes of the state. Boy, doesn't that scare the bejeesus out of you? Thanks for showing the depths of your character and convictions. You truly represent humankind in the 90s...Jenny Jones style.

Sincerely,

Marc Robinson
C.O.O. Fine Gold

Obituary: Peter Dormer

Peter Dormer died in London on December 24, 1996 after a long and courageous battle with cancer. Death came shortly before his 48th birthday, January 1, 1997. Until the end, his commitment to all of us through his writing and unique thinking was central to his days.

He is survived by his mother who resides in Cambridge, England; a sister who resides in Canada; and his wife and great companion, Jane Smith. Jane is an editor for the *British Medical Journal*.

At the time of his death he was editing *The Culture of Craft: Status and Future* which will be published by Manchester University Press in 1997. We were revising *Jewelry in Our Time* and we had begun to write *Ceramics Since 1995* to be published by Thames and Hudson in 1998-99.

We who knew him personally were privileged and those of you who knew him through his work and words understood his passion for the world of design, architecture, and crafts.

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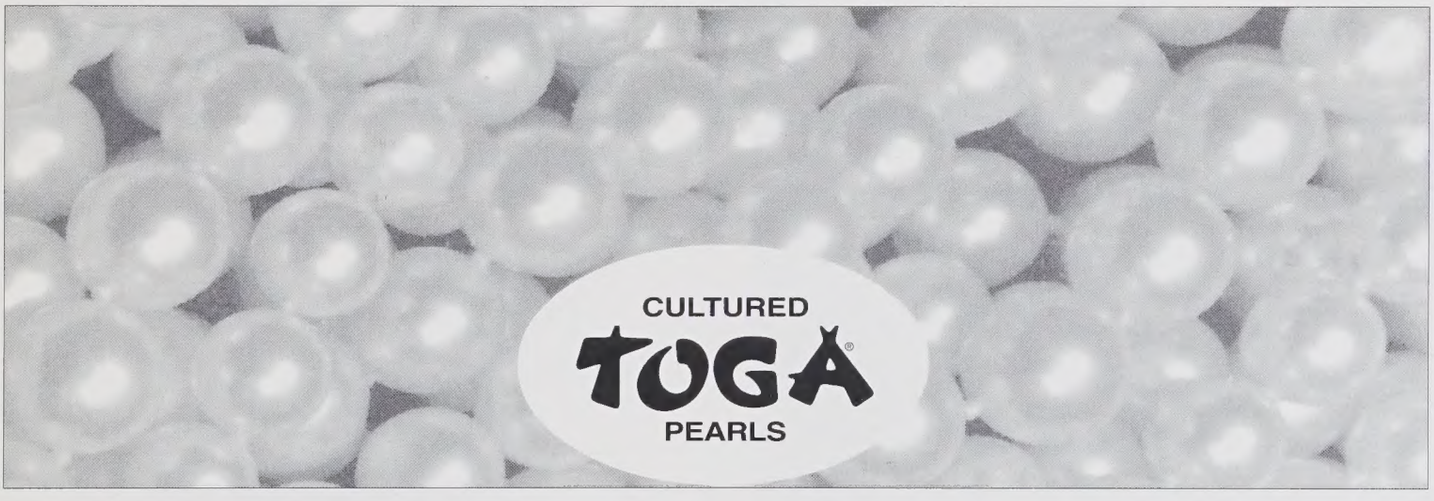

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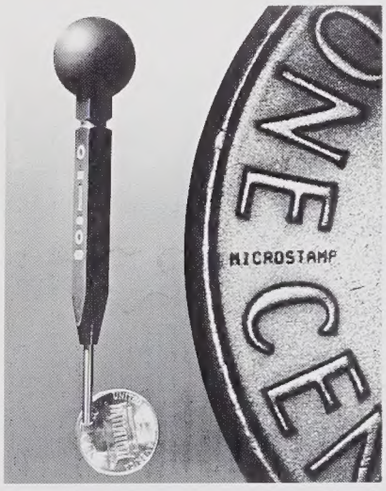

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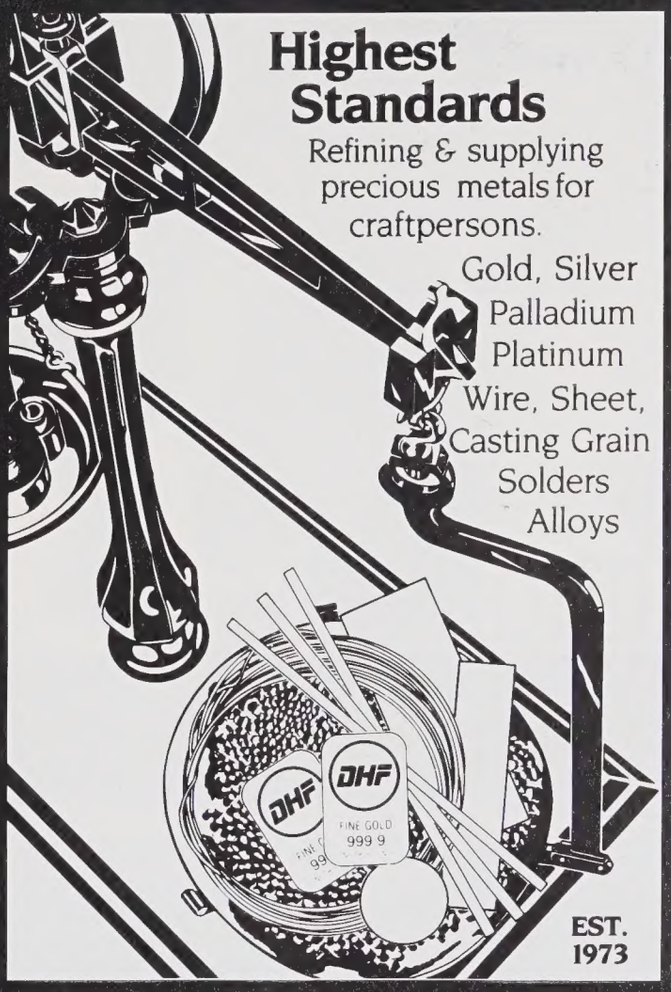

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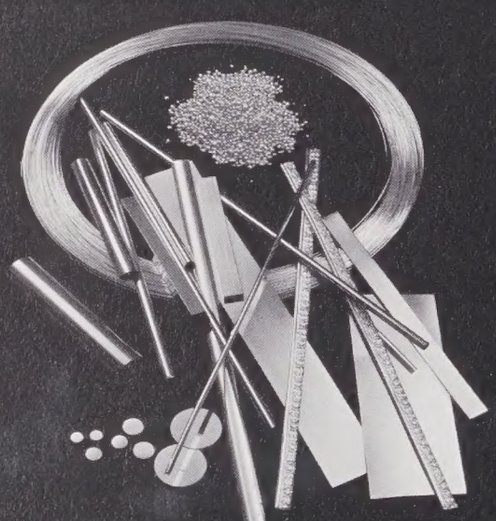

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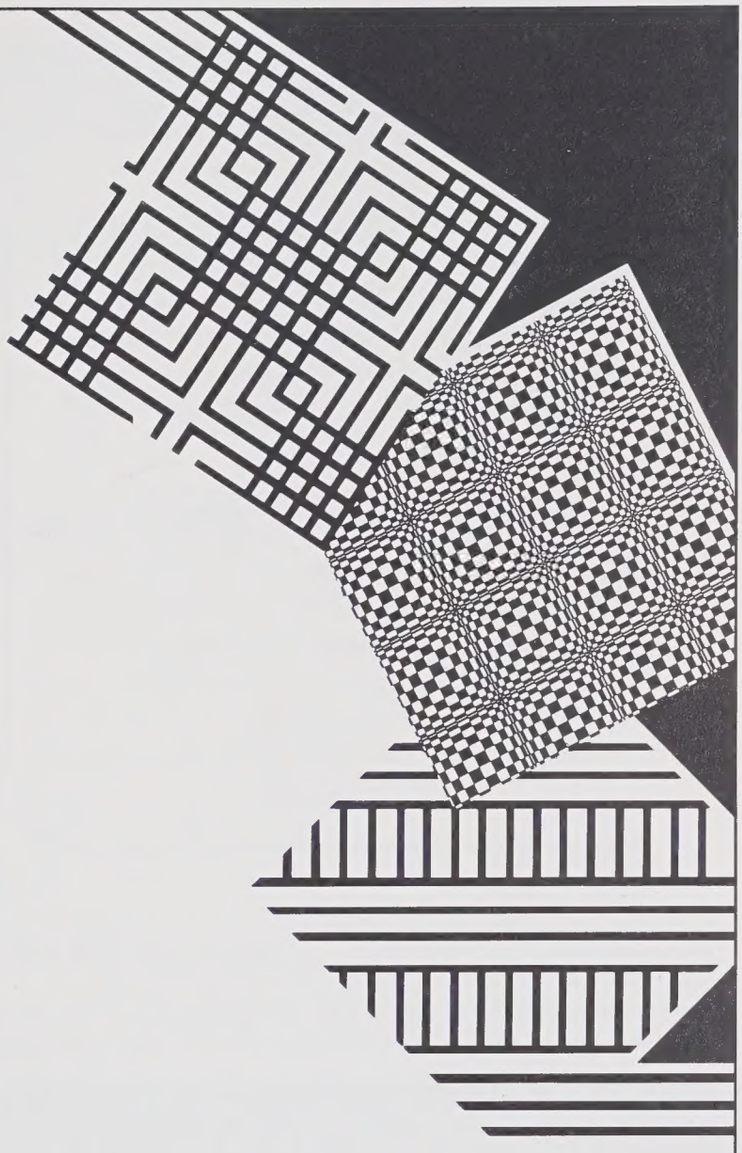

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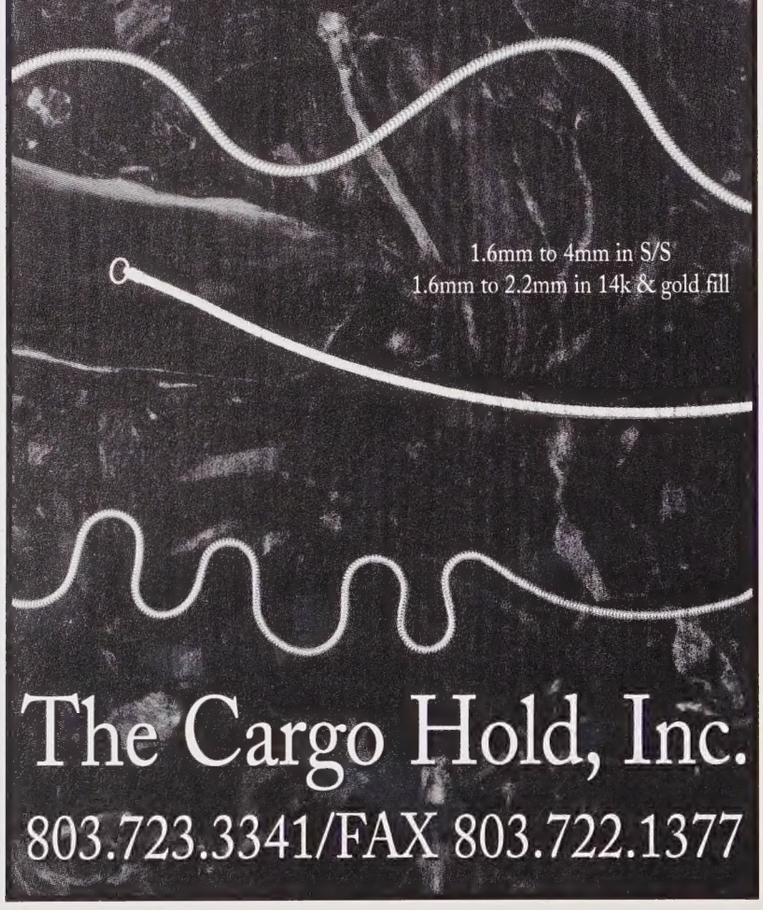

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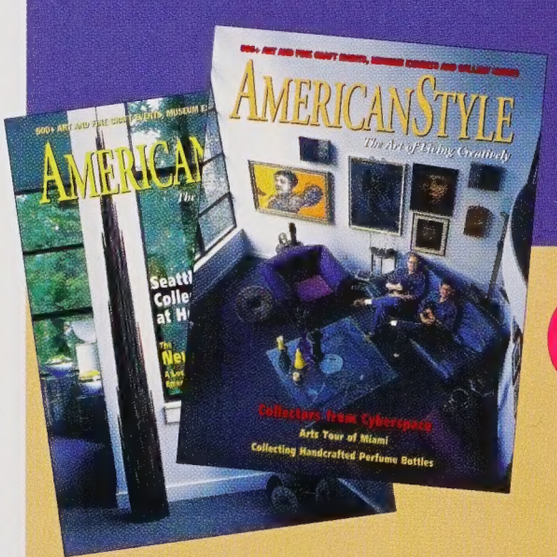

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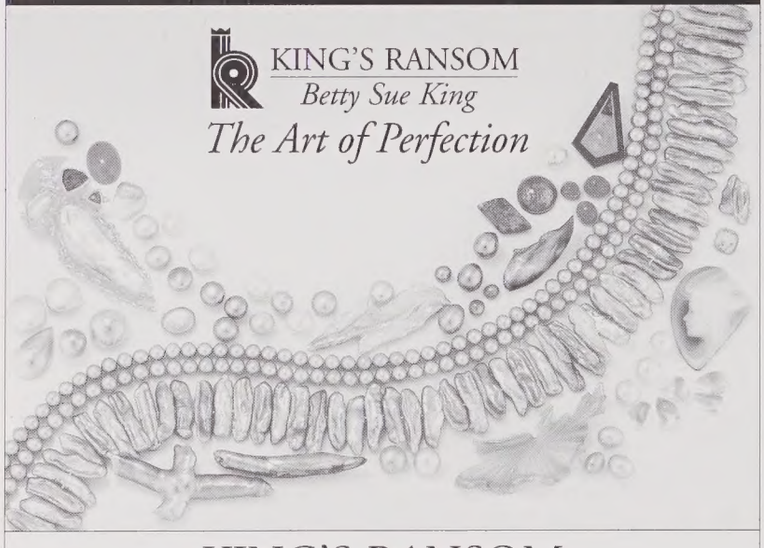

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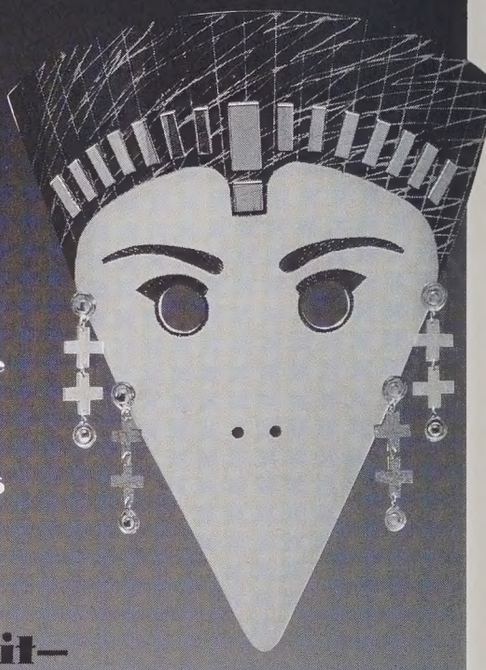

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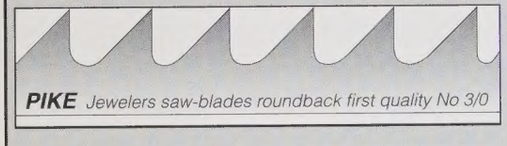

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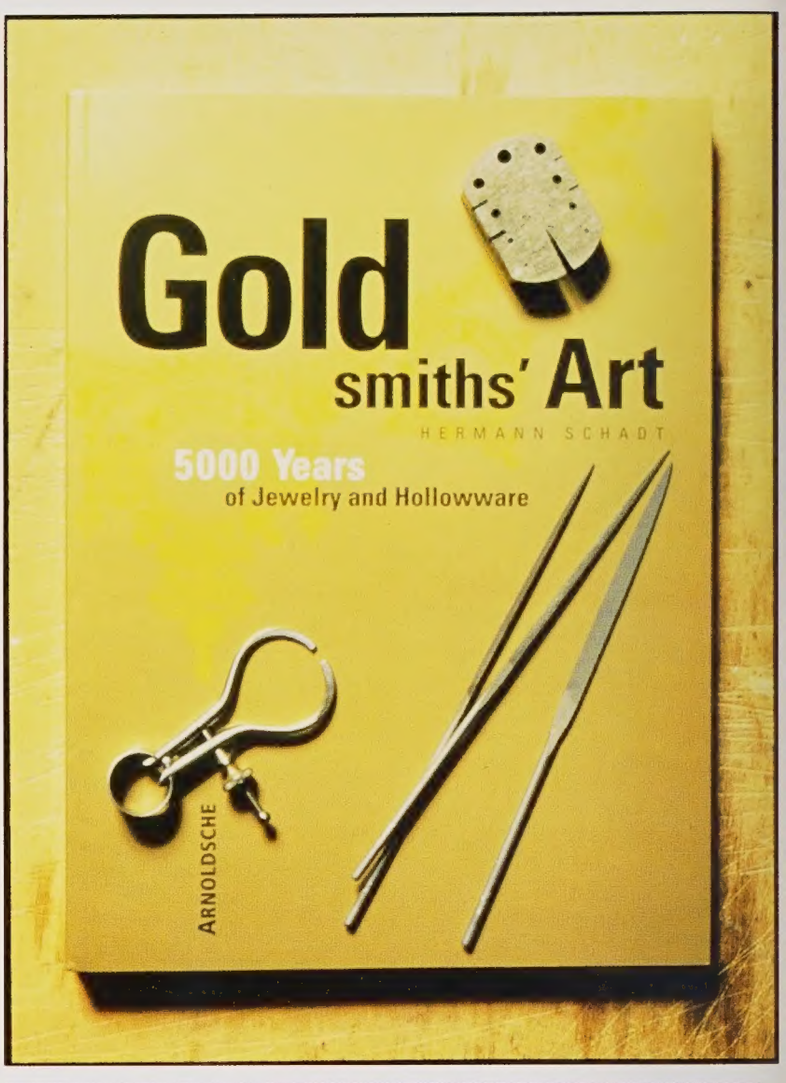

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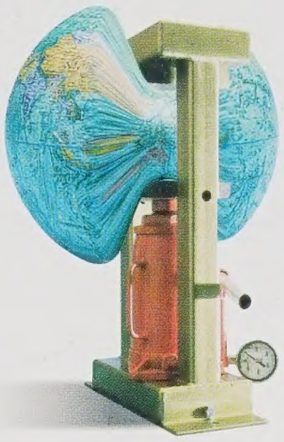

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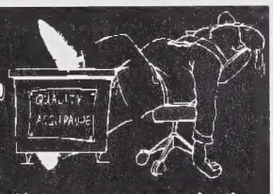

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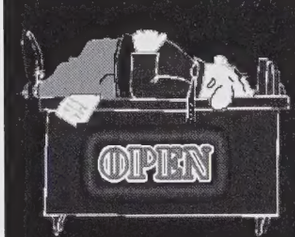

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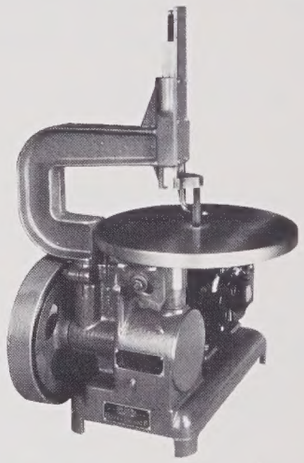

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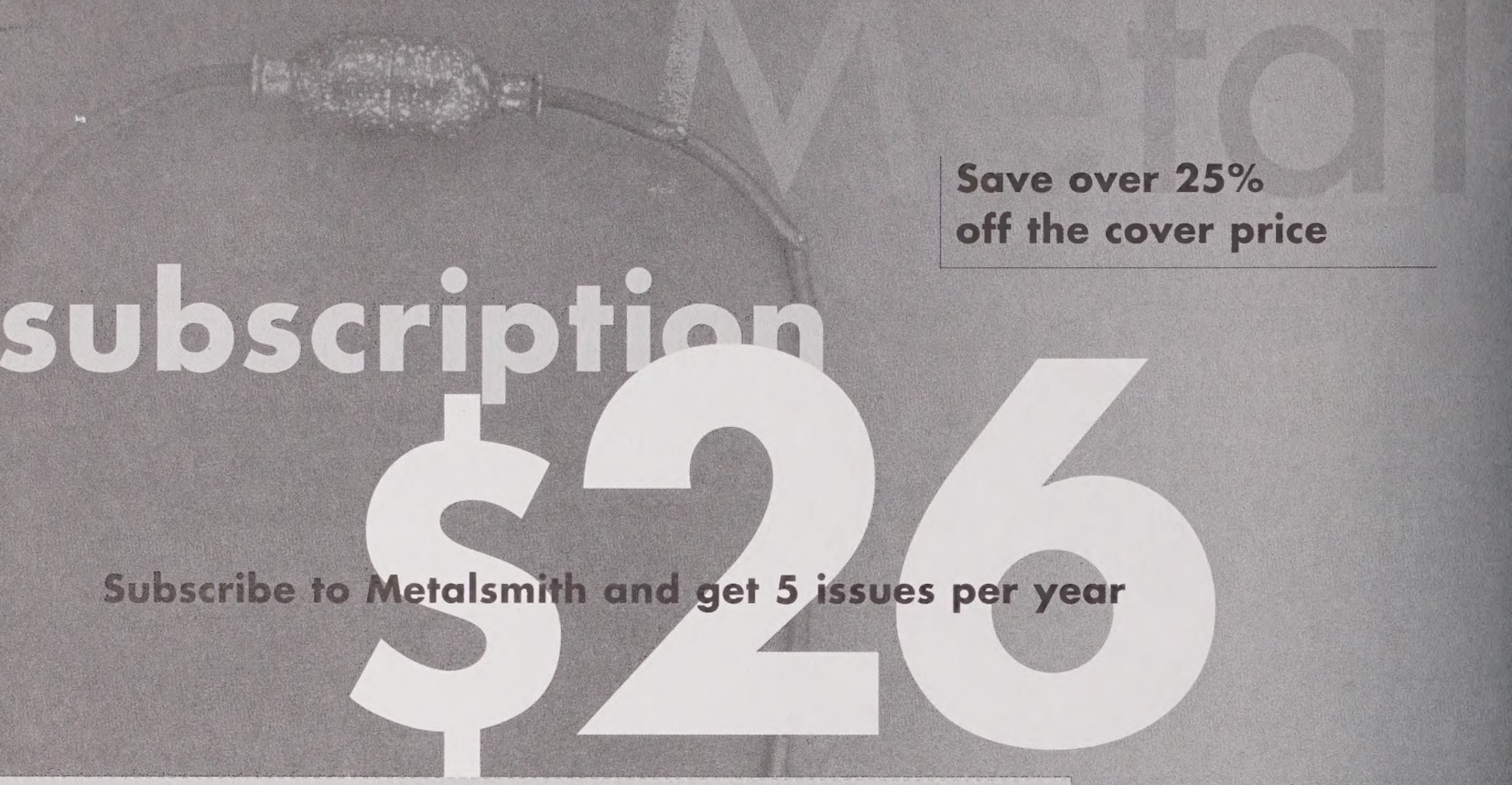

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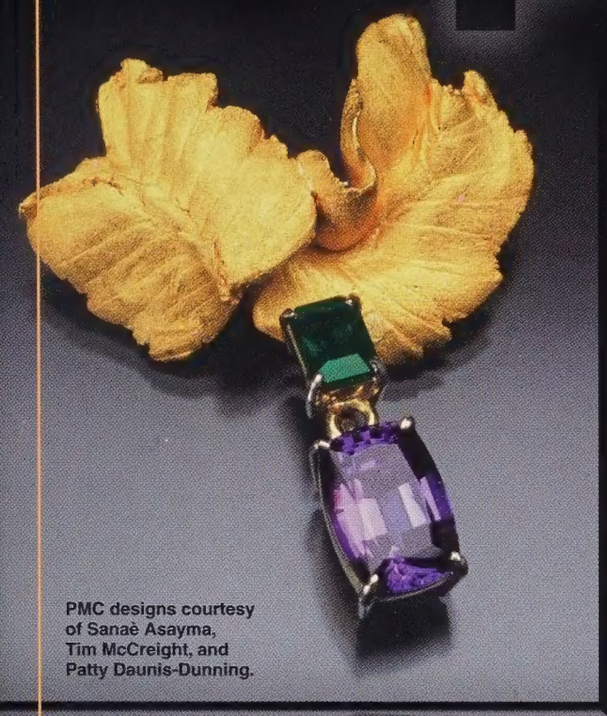

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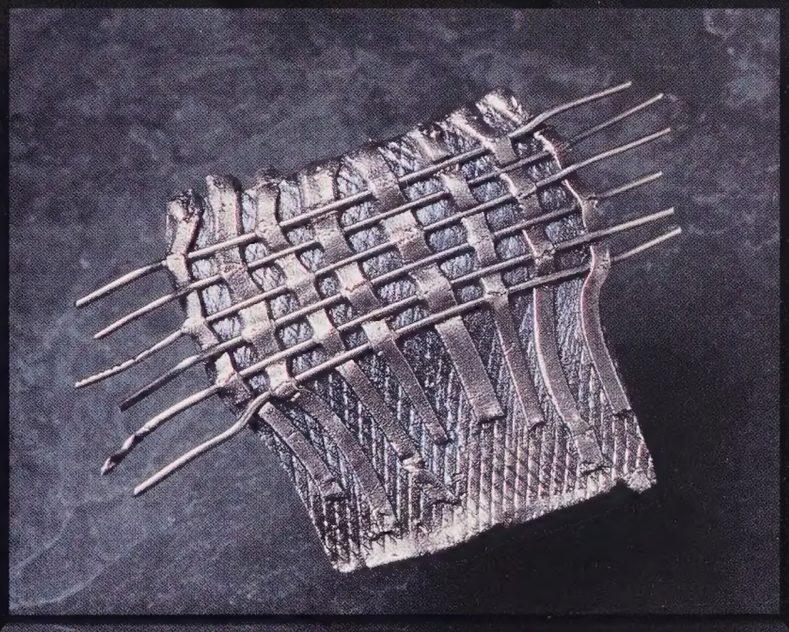

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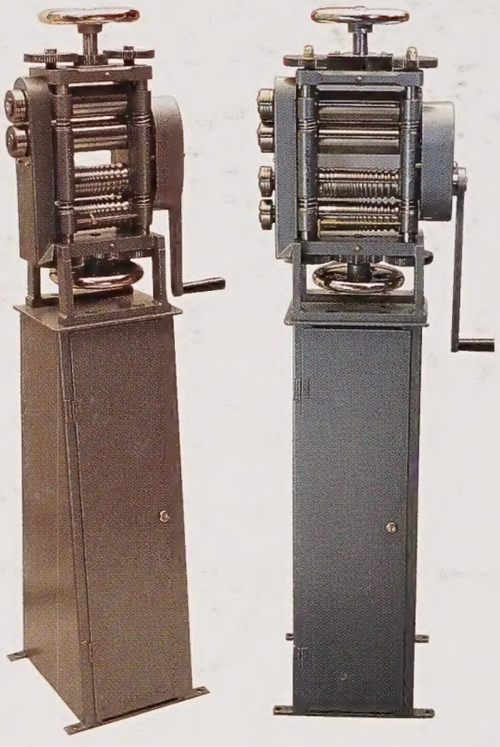

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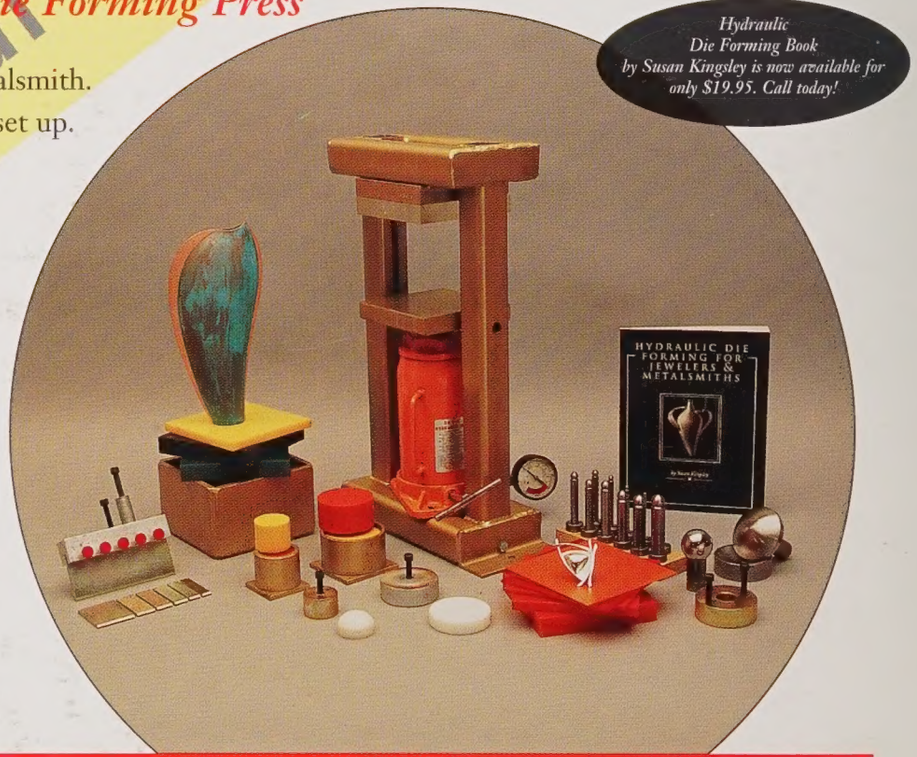

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